

THE  
REMNANT  
BY RUFUS M. JONES

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# THE REMNANT



THE CHRISTIAN REVOLUTION SERIES  
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# THE REMNANT

BY

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## PREFACE

THIS little book, written in the crowded days of a busy life and in one of the supreme crises of history, is an attempt to interpret in an untechnical style and manner the idea of the "remnant" and its function and mission in the history of reforms. I have gone back first to Isaiah and Plato, the early advocates of hope in the "remnant"; then I have reviewed, with much restraint and brevity, some of the famous "remnant" experiments; finally I have considered, again in the most compact compass, the historical significance of the remnant idea and its value as a method of achieving social and spiritual gains.

It would perhaps have been an advantage to some readers if I had expanded the study and worked out the historical movements in more detail and with fuller historical references. I felt, however, that the one definite idea which my book was written to interpret could best be driven home in this direct, uncomplicated way. Those who wish for more historical details will find them given in my two earlier books, *Studies in Mystical Religion*

and *Spiritual Reformers of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. In the present volume I have seized and presented the essential features of each experiment so that the reader might quickly see the spiritual value of the venture. I hope the little book will increase the reader's faith in the results of brave, sincere human effort and will enable him to unite with one of the fine spirits of the last century :

“ Say not the struggle nought availeth,  
The labour and the wounds are vain,  
The enemy faints not nor faileth  
And as things have been they remain.”

Haverford College,  
Haverford, Pennsylvania.

# I

## THE REMNANT

"THERE is," Plato says, "but a very small *remnant* of those who follow wisdom and who have tasted how sweet and blessed a possession it is." His account of the general multitude as contrasted with his remnant is pessimistic and saturated with despair. They are, he thinks, too mad and too untamed to offer any aid to any good causes. The wise man cannot expect to find the masses his allies in any noble undertaking. He is fortunate if they do not destroy the fruit of all his efforts, and finally kill him for stinging them awake and disturbing their ease. We do not need to accept Plato's aristocratic judgment of the multitude. He belonged to the patrician class, he looked down from above with the usual bias and prejudices of his isolated class and he was unable to be a sound judge of human nature as it actually is in the best democracies. But after all, he is right in centering his hopes upon "the small remnant." It was not an accident that the two greatest prophets of the ancient world—Plato and Isaiah—made so much of the "remnant" in the formulation of their hope for the better world of the future.\* Even if the multitude were vastly better in

\* I shall deal with Isaiah's "remnant" doctrine in the next chapter.

quality than Plato thought and better in fact than they actually are, the function of the "remnant" would still remain distinct, important and essential.

By "the remnant" used in the historical sense, we mean the small, outstanding group of persons who have vision of the true line of march for their age and people, clear insight into the underlying principle of life and action, and a faith that ventures everything to achieve what ought to be. It is the small circle of those who give their mind to the things that are true and elevated and just and pure and lovely and of good report\*. A few—a rare and chosen few—travel on ahead of the rest. They are willing to pay the price, in agony and suffering, which is always involved in spiritual advances. They are hyper-acute and sensitive to currents and forces which the others around them fail to observe and they are bolder than their neighbours in risking the seen for the unseen. They reverse the proverb about the birds in the bush, insisting that the two that are uncaught are better than the one poor thing fluttering in the hand!

Not all dreamers by any means make good remnants. There have been plenty of "visionaries" and "zealots" who have led their confiding followers astray, whose new Jerusalems were delusions and who, by

\* Philippians iv. 8. See Matthew Arnold's study of the "Remnant" in his essay entitled *Numbers*.



following iridescent rainbows, have lost the path of real progress for the race. It is not easy to indicate the marks by which one can discriminate in advance the sound remnant from the disordered one, the wise prophet from the fanatic who is on a blind trail. The most convincing test of course is the pragmatic one. The sound remnant scores an advance, the wayward remnant terminates at a mirage and arrives nowhere. History holds the answer. Hindsight settles what foresight cannot solve. The dreamer who cannot translate his dream into some visible fabric which persists in permanent form must take his place with the failures while the dreamer who can make the world become malleable to the moulding power of his ideal and can build it into lasting shape takes rank among the successes. It is, however, inconvenient to wait for the testimony of history. One must *act* before the long experiment of the testing process has been tried out. The decision of the contemporary must be made before "the returns" are all in. How can we tell reality from illusion, how can we know the wise idealist from the misguided pursuer of mirages? There is no sure, infallible sign. We search in vain for the "sterling" label stamped indelibly upon the genuine article. And yet there are some hints and clues which can be safely followed. It is not quite a blind guess, a fifty-fifty hazard.

The safe guide, the true prophet, the constructive remnant, builds on ahead of the experience of the multitude but along lines already revealed and indicated by the tested experience of men. The new pattern has been suggested by the inherent demands of the existing situation somewhat as the artist sees how to finish his creation so that the new part shall harmoniously fulfil and complete the part already fashioned. The remnant that is to advance the hope of the world differs from the abortive one in that the former has a gift for apprehending the higher *normal* traits of life, trusts them and brings them into operation, while the other is very apt to be caught in the swirls of the *abnormal* and to reveal the intensity and at the same time the eccentricity and waywardness of hysteria. Wherever the forces of life come into play, attended by social upheaval and individual enthusiasm, there will no doubt be some evidences of hysteria, but if a movement is to carry groups of people to a higher moral and spiritual level the leaders of it must be unlike their fellows only in that they approach more nearly than usual to the norm and standard of full, complete personality, and can make use of powers not always available for human action.

A remnant of the historical type is what biologists would call a *mutation*, a marked and successful variation from the habitual



order of life. It breaks away from the fixed and repeatable species and exhibits novelty. It brings a surprise, and makes a new start. Generally, though not always, it forms about a magnetic leader and is integrated by the creative power of his personality or by the dynamic force of the *idea* of which he is the exponent. The little group, organised and fused by its leader and *possessed* by its live idea, becomes a kind of experiment station or social laboratory for testing the value of the "truth" that has dawned upon them. This truth is likely at first to be overstated and to raise the little band of advocates to the white-hot state, but if it is some really constructive discovery which the world needs it will prove its worth in the original circle and will slowly gather significance and meaning through successive interpretations and through the corporate life which it produces and maintains in the group. In most cases, too, the value of the new idea can be judged and estimated by the reactions which it effects upon the parent-body from which the remnant broke away. A remnant has not performed its legitimate service if it does not mature and ripen its *idea* and finally carry it into the life of the wider circle out of which it came.

Unity is such a precious thing and catholicity is so desirable that many persons cannot pardon what seems to them the sin of schism. They are sure to pre-condemn the rebel

attitude which is apt to characterise a remnant. It is always better, they insist, to reform any body from within itself, and to do it by quiet, gradual processes, rather than by cataclysmic and disruptive methods. In the abstract these persuaders to unity are right and it would be well if the world could move steadily upward by an unbroken progressive process; but unfortunately there are times in the life of institutions when every attempt at reform from within is suppressed and when nothing but a moral earthquake is effective. The spiritual "rebel" who cares more for truth than he does for unity has played an important rôle in history and his mission is perhaps not ended yet. Not all remnant groups have been definitely revolutionary and of the rebel type, but for the most part they have in the long run felt themselves forced to sacrifice unity for the sake of preserving the fulness of the light which seemed to be revealed to them. They have sometimes been rash and sometimes narrow, but they have on the whole performed a service which deserves our careful study and our sincere appreciation.

Not the least of the services that the remnant groups have rendered is the discovery which they have made and proclaimed of the august authority of conscience. They have repeatedly reminded a heedless world that Sinai is not in Arabia but in the heart of man.

## II

### THE REMNANT IDEA IN ISAIAH

THE remnant doctrine first appears in the writings of Isaiah. It had its ground and origin in a semi-pessimism—a despair of the race as a whole. It assumed that the vast majority of the people had gone hopelessly astray—a position which Plato also held. They hear indeed but understand not, and see indeed but perceive not. Their hearts are “fat,” their ears are heavy, their eyes are shut—they will not turn and be healed.\* They are incurably diseased with sin and stupidity. There is, however, the doctrine maintains, a small “remnant,” a holy seed, that can be gathered out of the godless mass, the immense refuse, the great harvest of weeds for burning. While from one point of view the remnant doctrine seems a counsel of despair, like the “survival” theory of Nature—“of fifty seeds she often brings but one to bear”—from another point of view it has had very great historical importance, and over and over again the remnant groups have discovered, preserved, and passed on, as we shall see, some of the most precious truths and ideals of our noblest faith of to-day.

\* Isaiah vi. 9-10.

W. Robertson Smith has pointed out in his *Prophets of Israel*, the important service which Isaiah—the foremost Hebrew exponent of the doctrine—rendered when he gathered round himself a band of faithful disciples who accepted his spiritual leadership, who dedicated themselves to his ideals for the realisation of a holy nation, and who, holding aloof from the course and policy of the misguided nation waited in patience for God to demonstrate the verity of the vision of their prophet. “The circle that gathered round Isaiah and his household in these evil days,” he says, “holding themselves apart from their countrymen, treasuring the words of revelation, and waiting for Jehovah, were indeed, as Isaiah describes them, signs and tokens in Israel from Jehovah of hosts that dwelleth in Mount Zion.” “The formation of this little community was a new thing in the history of religion. Till then no one had dreamed of a fellowship of faith dissociated from all national forms, maintained without the exercise of ritual services, bound together by faith in the divine word alone. It was the birth of a new era in the Old Testament religion, for it was the birth of the conception of the *Church*, the first step in the emancipation of spiritual religion from the forms of political life—a step not less significant that all its consequences were not seen till centuries had passed away. The community of true religion and the political



community of Israel had never before been separated even in thought; now they stood side by side, conscious of their mutual antagonism, and never again fully to fall back into their old identity.”\* Most historical scholars to-day would hardly agree with W. Robertson Smith that “the formation of this little community was a new thing in the history of religion,” but in any case this was, up to that time, the most outstanding instance of such a remnant, and when once the spiritual group, holding a definite faith and possessed of intense hopes, was thus differentiated, it became, as he suggests, a permanent feature of spiritual religion.

The ideals of this early remnant, as they are set forth in the message of Isaiah, present many similarities to the ideals that have directed the aspirations of later spiritual groups. There is, first of all, an intense moral emphasis—a call to make life and practice correspond with faith and profession. Ceremonial drops almost out of sight as an empty thing. “Tramping the temple” is Isaiah’s vivid ironical phrase for hollow performances which are supposed to be religious but which are utterly vain in themselves. No one in the long historical line of protestors against *formalism* has said sterner things: “What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Jehovah: I have had enough of the burnt offerings of

\* *Op. cit.* pp. 274-5.

rams and the fat of fed beasts ; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tramp my courts ? Bring no more vain oblations ; incense is an abomination unto me ; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies,—I cannot away with . . . Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.”\*

This same social and ethical emphasis appears throughout all the messages of this radical reformer of existing religion. God looked for grapes and His vineyard is bringing forth only *wild* grapes. He looked for justice but behold oppression ; for righteousness but behold a cry from those who suffer through unrighteousness.† What use is there in “professing religion” if at the same time you are drawing iniquity with a cord and sin with a cart rope ? What effect will “temple performances” have if one at the same time calls evil good and good evil ; if one puts darkness for light and light for darkness.‡

The trouble with the nation, Isaiah insists, is downright stupidity, denseness of soul. “My people will not *think* ; Israel will not

\* Isaiah i. 11-17. † Isaiah v. 1-7. ‡ Isaiah v. 18-20.

look at plain moral facts.”\* “Except the Lord had left unto us *a very small remnant* we should have been as Sodom and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.”† The prophet and his remnant do think, they look straight at moral facts, and they see what the inevitable sequence must be. There is “a plummet of righteousness” in the universe, a law of moral gravitation, which nobody can escape. Covenants with death and agreements with hell may seem to promise success but they “shall not stand” when the test comes, they are “annulled” by the eternal nature of things.‡ In one of the prophet’s immortal pictures, as brief as it is vivid, he describes a man caught in a state of spiritual nakedness, in the cold and pitiless storm of moral consequences, and trying in vain to cover himself with his contracted and shrunken “religion”: “The bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself on it and the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in it!”§ But discouraging as the nation appears to an awakened soul and helpless as is the task of changing the fat-hearted masses of the people, there is, nevertheless, a remnant which bears within itself a seed of promise. A tenth—not a submerged tenth, but a superior tenth—shall save the cause and carry forward the mission of Israel, even though the nation

\* Isaiah i. 3.

† Isaiah i. 9.

‡ Isaiah xxviii. 17-18.

§ xxviii. 20.

itself as a whole "proves recreant." As a terebinth tree and as an oak, whose vital substance is within, may be cut down and yet sprout up again, so this living tenth shall be 'a holy seed.'"\*

This remnant group that gathered around Isaiah was bent upon a complete and positive reform of individual moral life, of social customs, and of national ideals. Drunkenness is portrayed in all its plain bestial tendencies and in its unescapable deadly effects. "A tempest of hail, a destroying storm, as a tempest of mighty waters overflowing" shall cast down to the earth those reeling, staggering, stammering drunkards and the nation that is guided by such foolish stupid, blind guides who in the hour of crisis will go and fall backward "and be broken and snared and taken."† The prophet's pictures of drunkenness are no more powerful in their grim humour than are the descriptions of the decadent fashions of the time. It would be difficult to match this picture in the writings of any later puritan moralists. "Moreover, Jehovah said, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with outstretched necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet; therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of

\* vi. 13.

† See especially chap. xxviii, and v. 11-15, 22-25.



Zion, and Jehovah will lay bare their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the beauty of their anklets, and the cauls and the crescents; the pendants and the bracelets and the mufflers; the headties and the anklechains, and the sashes and the perfume boxes, and the amulets; the rings and the nose jewels; the festival robes and the mantles, and the shawls, and the satchels; the hand-mirrors and the fine linen, and the turbans, and the veils. And it shall come to pass that instead of sweet spices there shall be rottenness; and instead of a girdle, a rope; and instead of well-set hair, baldness; and instead of a robe a girding of sackcloth; branding instead of beauty. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war.”\*

There is, furthermore, at the heart of this prophetic remnant a moral horror of war and a clear faith—here uttered for the first time,—that war is eventually to be eliminated by the spread of the spiritual, ethical religion, for which the remnant stands. “It shall come to pass in the latter days,” this prophet declares, that the remnant of spiritual people shall become numerous and powerful enough to dominate the nation and through it to influence the world, and the peoples everywhere, by the dispersion of light and the spread of righteousness, shall “beat their swords into plowshares and their spears

\* iii. 16-26.

into pruning-hooks ; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”\* In one of Isaiah’s most familiar passages, the old order yields place to a new one and the warrior is supplanted by a wholly new type of hero ; “all the armour of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall be for burning, for fuel of fire ; for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ; and the government shall be upon his shoulders ; and his name shall be called ‘ Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.’ Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.”†

The transformations of the world which this idealist sees coming in the future, “in the latter time,” are no doubt in his view to be wrought by “the zeal of the Lord,” by direct divine operation, by forces not yet in evidence anywhere, but it is nevertheless to be recognised that they are to come through the “remnant” and as a result of its faithfulness. This remnant is always the starting-point, always the ground of hope, always the nucleus of the new world of righteousness and peace. Every ideal picture which the prophet gives—when “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea”—presupposes a spiritual

\* Isaiah ii. 4. As this is found in a great passage in Micah (iv. 1-7) it would appear to have been a spiritual ideal not of a single prophet but of a group. † ix. 5-7.

remnant, gathered about an ideal leader, imbued with the spirit of wisdom and counsel and having righteousness for the girdle of his loins. By the expansion and spread of this spirit, by the triumph of this way of life "justice shall dwell in the wilderness; and righteousness shall abide in the fruitful field; and the work of righteousness shall be peace and the effect of righteousness quietness and confidence for ever; and my people shall abide in a peaceful habitation and in safe dwellings and in quiet resting places."\*

But great as is the mission of the remnant, as expressed in the writings of Isaiah, greater still is its mission as conceived by the unknown prophet of the exile whose writings are preserved in the latter half of the Book of Isaiah—chapters XL.—LXVI. Here the hopes and ideals of the spiritual leaders of the nation, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, all of whom adopted the remnant doctrine, are raised to their full glory. It had already been seen by these prophets, especially by Jeremiah, that suffering does not necessarily mean punishment inflicted by the wrath of God, it may mean discipline, purification and preparation for future service. The sufferer, the spiritual remnant afflicted for its faith and vision, may in the end redeem the nation, and save the people. This idea, I say, reaches its culmination in the wonderful

\* xxxii. 16-18. The Prophet's two great pictures of ideal world-conditions are xi. 1-10 and xxxii.

passages which portray "the suffering servant."

Some regard the suffering servant as a single individual, to be identified of course with Christ; others believe that the whole nation is meant. It seems much more probable, however, that the devout, God-fearing, loyal, spiritual portion of the nation is here described as a personified community, acting essentially as one, and suffering to redeem the whole nation and to prepare it for a wider world service in the future. Manifestly there is still in the nation a vast section that does not *see*, that has not heard or learned. It is not yet perfected as an instrument of the Lord. But within it there is a holy residue, a suffering seed, a faithful remnant, that voluntarily will suffer for the redemption of the rest of the nation and vicariously bear the sin of the whole people. In this way the true Israel is to become the prophet-people of the Lord, to endure and suffer for others, to travail for the spiritual birth of the nation and to become a mighty redemptive force for the perfection of the greater Israel and eventually of the wider world of humanity.\*

\* For the delineation of "the suffering servant" see especially chapters lii.-liii. for the world-influence, see chapter lx.



### III

## THE REMNANT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE Pharisaic ideal was obviously a remnant ideal. The party of the Pharisees, or the "sect," as St. Paul named it, as it first appeared, and as in ideal it always remained, was a high-minded and serious endeavour to form a true Israel within the larger Israel, a holy seed, prophetic of the real nation. This intense and devoted band of the faithful proposed to keep, to the jot and tittle, the whole teaching of God, the perfect Torah which He had committed to His people. Others might perform *some* of its commands and live by the word of God at times and seasons, but they, the elect and separate, set apart to be the *ecclesiola in ecclesia*, were to transmit pure and uncontaminated the full revelation of the divine will, and they in the midst of "a crooked and perverse people" were to be the perfect doers of it.

Another interesting, but totally different, remnant in New Testament times is to be found in the little group or groups indicated but not described in the early chapters of Luke's Gospel. These seem to have been tiny spiritual groups of persons who did not feel religion to be a burden or a yoke but rather

a joy and inspiration. They formed their piety on the Psalms instead of upon the legal sections of the Old Testament. They lived in hope and expectation, and cultivated, while they were waiting for a better world, a beautiful spirit of faith and confidence in God, and they practised a method of love and good-will towards men. They are variously called "the quiet ones in the land"; "the poor in spirit"; or "the poor"; "the humble." They constituted the prepared circle to which Jesus came, in which He grew up, and to which His message was first given. It was "a little flock" all ready in advance for the message of the kingdom and inwardly responsive to the good news.

But in a wider and much more significant way the primitive Church, which emerged after the Resurrection, was the real New Testament "remnant," the seed or first-fruit of the expected divine harvest. The first Christians, who in the early chapters of Luke's second book, *The Acts*, are called "those of the way," felt themselves, even more emphatically than had any other inner circle of the Jewish nation, to be "a peculiar people," a "remnant," "a true Israel" within Israel. The first epistle of Peter makes this idea, which is implicit in most New Testament literature, definitely explicit. This writer declares: "Ye [who compose the Church of Christ] are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's

own possession [a peculiar people A.V.] . . . who in time past were no people but *now* are the people of God.”\* The wider group of the Jewish people have rejected the elect and sure cornerstone for the true Zion; they have “stumbled” at the word of revelation and have proved to be “disobedient” to the truth, but the smaller inner circle, “begotten of the incorruptible Seed of God,” forms the nucleus of the holy nation, a remnant of God’s own people. This same idea is further conveyed in this Epistle by the figure of Noah’s Ark. This Ark saved a few chosen souls out of all the world and now symbolises in “a true likeness” the Church in which an elect and chosen group are being saved.† The same explicit conception is expressed again in the Epistle to Titus. Christ our Saviour, according to the writer of this Epistle, “gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a people for His own possession [a peculiar people A.V.]”‡ But this idea that those of Christ’s way are a remnant, a chosen seed, does not rest on sporadic texts, in late New Testament books, it is implied everywhere, and it is embedded in the very structure of the primitive Church as we know it. This is true whether we look for our data in Acts and the synoptic Gospels, which came in the main out of Jewish circles, or whether we turn for our material to the

\* 1 Peter ii. 9-10.

† Titus ii. 14.

‡ 1 Peter iii. 20-21.

Pauline Epistles and the early apostolic Fathers. There are wide variations, of course, in these different interpretations of the "beloved community," as my revered teacher, Josiah Royce, has called the apostolic Church, but they all agree in one particular, namely, that this inner, intimate, beloved community is a spiritual remnant, living and fulfilling its mission within a wider world of men unillumined and unsaved.

This inner circle of "believers," "disciples," or "saints" is called from a very early date the *Ecclesia*, or congregation, of Christ, or sometimes the *Ecclesia* in Christ. Its members are "elect," chosen out of the greater body of Israel, or of the world, as the case may be. They form, as St. Paul says, at the present time and in the present world, "a remnant according to the election of grace," and, he continues, those of the election have obtained the rest, which those who are hardened in heart and dull of soul have missed.\* A notable saying of Jesus also contains the remnant idea: "Many are called but few are chosen."† The spiritual fellowship, "the little flock," is declared to be smaller than the total number of those who hear the message.

The most characteristic thing about this "beloved community," whether it be the Jerusalem group or the Pauline congregations, is that the members of it are

\* Romans xi. 5-7.

† Matthew xxii. 14.



recipients, and the community as a whole is a recipient, of an extraordinary experience of the Spirit, who is thought of in the main as the continued invisible presence of Christ. The world knows nothing of this experience, and, in the thought of these writers, the wider circle of the Jewish nation knows nothing of it, but every "saint" has "the demonstration of the Spirit" and every congregation has it. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His—he belongs neither to Him nor to His congregation.\* This Spirit bears witness with the believers' spirits that they are children of God; it is thus that the cry of "Abba," Father, bursts forth in the soul.† By this same Spirit "the beloved community" is "baptised into one living body and made to drink of one Spirit."‡ A baptism of the Spirit had come upon them, cleansing like fire and like a kindling flame, making the recipients of it burning and shining lights in a world of darkness. Everybody could see that a new force was revealed in their lives, a new dynamic was at work within them, and, though few in number and of mean origin, they were irresistible conveyers of a new order.

These spiritual groups, or circles, of the new fellowship, composing the local churches existing as "tiny islands" in a vast sea of unbelievers, were possessed of intense and

\* Romans viii. 9.

† Romans viii. 16.

‡ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

propulsive faith. The resurrection of Christ, demonstrated to them in experience, was as certain to them as was any fact which their eyes saw. Their faith in the resurrection underlay all their other faiths. It was this central faith that had turned their seemingly overwhelming defeat at Calvary into a victory by which at once they became more than conquerors. By this event they were convinced that Jesus, though crucified, was now declared to be Messiah and Lord. They now had a future assured. Their ascended Lord who still seemed with them as a spiritual presence, when they broke their bread and gathered in their upper room, or in their house-churches for worship, would soon visibly return and become the living Head of His Kingdom and would fulfil the age-long hopes of the great prophets. Whether the interim were to be long or short, they were already His, sealed with His Spirit, endued with powers from Him, chosen to be His *witnesses* to the unbelieving world and commissioned to enlarge the circle of the faithful and to prepare for the near return of the Lord.

There can be no doubt that this vivid expectation of "near return" gave the primitive church a peculiar intensity. It was, on the whole, a fortunate and providential illusion. One trembles at what would have happened if the bald truth which history has revealed had been thrust upon the

consciousness of this little remnant then, and if their fervid hopes had been suddenly damped by a sight of the actual facts. They did their work and they held their ground under the great inspiration of a consummation, near at hand and coming by miracle. They could "die daily" because their kingdom was pledged and assured. What would have happened if they had been forced to face the truth that the world, with its sin and sorrow, was to zigzag on for long centuries and that Christ's kingdom was to "come" so slowly that each new generation would hardly discover any gain over the preceding one! What would they have felt if they had realised that the prophetic hopes of "a Day of the Lord" meant only that *every day is a Day of the Lord*, in short, that God's kingdom comes through the sifting processes and the slow march of history!

Where there was one person who could appreciate St. Paul's spiritual discovery that Christ was already here, forever born anew in the hearts of saints, reliving His life in true believers, producing a new creation within the soul, and so making here and now a kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy, there were thousands who responded to cruder conceptions and keyed themselves up with apocalyptic hopes. Where there was one who could rise to the lofty message of the Fourth Gospel that a Spirit of Truth, moving as an invisible breeze from man to man,

would spread through the world and guide men eventually into all the truth, there were multitudes who trembled as they thought of a judgment near at hand and who accepted the Church as an Ark of Safety in the impending storm of destruction.

But the immense fact after all which was established by this Christian remnant in the first century was the actual emergence into history of a new type of life, a new order of society. It is a useless labour to try to prove that Christ founded a Church and established an ecclesiastical system that was equipped with infallible authority to transmit the truth and to mediate salvation. It is equally impossible to trace back to the Galilean Master the vast theological system that later was supposed to be a necessity for human salvation. But there can be no serious question that, as St. John says, *grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*.<sup>\*</sup> A new and joyous discovery of God was made through Him. It was not a definition of Him, not a new metaphysical account of the Absolute, but a wholly new *experience* of God as a loving, forgiving Father. Those who fully caught this idea—and the little remnant surely did—were profoundly transformed by it. It expelled at once from the soul a whole army of fears. The yoke of daily work and toil, with fear and worry banished, became easy and its burden light.

\* John i. 17.



A new dimension opened upward toward God for the soul and a new principle of relationship, of love and brotherhood between men, was established within their lives.

In spite of intense hopes and illusory expectations that a new world was coming by miracle, nevertheless the members of this early remnant already were putting into actual operation the moral and spiritual forces by which alone a Kingdom of God could come in a world like ours. They had found a living faith in a living God ; they were proving the unparalleled power of affection for a great Personality who had loved them and given His life for them ; they were carried onward by an undivided faith that God's reign was to be established in the world ; they knew that their lives must even now exhibit the moral and spiritual traits of the expected kingdom, and they accepted as their method of warfare the new way which their Master had introduced—the conquest of evil by goodness, of hate and violence by patience and love, of error and darkness by light and truth, and the empire of the world by the sacrifice of self through love.

## IV

### THE LITTLE CHURCH OF THE SPIRIT —THE MONTANISTS

THE Early Christians always cherished the ideal of a Church composed of "saints." With their outward eyes they saw that the Church had "spots and wrinkles," and they recognised that not only "gold, silver and precious stones" were builded into it, but also "hay, wood and stubble." Tares grew among the wheat even from the very first. And yet the early builders of the Church hoped all things, believed all things and expected the growing structure to be "a habitation of God in the Spirit." That boldest of all New Testament prophecies, the one recorded in the Fourth Gospel :\* "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do, *and greater works than these shall he do*," kindled vivid expectation and became a glorious hope. Unfortunately, more and more as time went on, "the spots and wrinkles" increased, "the hay, wood and stubble" became evident. St. Paul's hopeful word, "saint," used in his Epistles for any member of the Church, came to be reserved

\* John xiv. 12.

for the rare spiritual specimen that stood out in contrast to the ordinary believers.

The most marked and notable change which the first century revealed in the life of the Church was the change from a free, creative, spontaneous, enthusiastic, democratic society to an ordered, organised, systematised Church, governed and directed by ordained officials. With this outward change came also a corresponding inward change, namely from *faith* as a personal trust and confidence in the God and Father whom Christ had shown them to belief in a body of sacred doctrines, accepted on authority and held as essential to salvation ; and at the same time a change from sporadic, inspired, congregational ministry, which depended on the endowment of divine "gifts" granted to individual members of the body, to a fixed system of service, in the hands of the local bishop, or presbyter, who was both governor and teacher of the Church over which he was overseer.

It is not possible now to discover the definite steps which marked these profound changes in the methods and character of the primitive Church, nor to designate the person or persons who inaugurated and guided the stages of the great transformation. It is probable that no one *consciously* introduced the new order. It was a gradual process rather than a novel *leap* or a sharp *break* with the past. St. Paul's letters show plainly

that he is pushing all the time in the direction of order, stability and efficiency. His aim is always to weed out exercises which do not "edify" and to encourage those persons who have constructive capacity. The writers of the various "Pastoral Epistles" had a tremendous influence in the work of stabilising the Church of the second century. It is doubtful whether any other single person did more to determine the changes now under consideration than did the remarkable writer who produced the three documents known as First and Second Timothy and Titus.\* They were written to further the episcopal organisation of the Church and to establish sound doctrine. We are in another world from the one familiar to us in St. Paul's correspondence.

The most interesting of all the great organisers of the early time was Ignatius of Antioch, who suffered martyrdom about 110 A.D. He was apostolic in spirit and a man of real constructive genius. On his way from Antioch in Syria to the amphitheatre in Rome where he was to face the beasts he wrote his impassioned epistles to the Churches of the districts through which his travels took him. They all emphasise the need of an authoritative organisation to give the Churches stability, efficiency and power. "Do nothing," he enjoins, "without your bishop." "Reverence your bishop as though

\* It seems likely that they contain fragments of genuine letters written by St. Paul, though in their present form they are evidently second century compositions.



he were Jesus Christ," is his message. He sees no future for a Church which has a loose and mobile organisation and an uncertain and shifting teaching. If the Church is to be a *body* at all it must have a Head, a real Head, a visible Head, who speaks with an authority that no one can question or doubt.

This was the direction in which the second century was travelling. The tendency of the age was towards centralised organisation. The fear of "heresy" and of "false teaching" made the Church turn to those who were believed to be empowered by ordination to speak infallibly for the rest, while the growing belief in the magical efficacy of the two sacraments vastly heightened the importance of the persons who were ordained to administer them. The country neighbourhoods and the old-fashioned members were not as resigned to these changes as were the city congregations and those who emphasised progress and efficiency. A protest, if it were to be made, would most naturally be made in the rural districts, and such a protest, in fact amounting to a revolt, did come and came largely from the country sections.

The movement was initiated by Montanus, a Phrygian, about the middle of the second century.\* Montanus was subject to unusual psychic experiences and felt himself to be the chosen instrument of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete. It seemed to him, on the greater

\* It first came to the attention of the Bishop of Rome in 177.

occasions of divine incursion, as though his own personality were obliterated and as though the Spirit completely possessed him and made him the passive medium of revelation. The scanty accounts of the ecstasies of Montanus indicate that he "prophesied" in a manner quite like that of the ecstatic speakers in the primitive Church, as St. Paul describes them in the Corinthian Epistles. He was soon followed in this type of "prophetic" ministry by two women prophetesses named Priscilla, or Prisca, and Maximilla. They were greatly revered by the simple Phrygian people and their revelations were believed as infallible oracles of truth. It seemed to these "prophets," and it seemed no less to the people who listened to them, that a new dispensation had come. The "greater things" that had been promised were now to be realised, they believed, because the Spirit had come and was speaking directly to them and through them.

They assumed at once that God intended to create a spiritual Church of prophets in place of the systematised Church, officially governed and directed by bishops, and they announced the progressive character of revelation in contrast to the static form that was accepted as final in the Great Church. They declared that revelation had always been progressive and marked by advancing stages: a legal stage of discipline for the infant world; a second stage for the world in the

period of its youth; a stage of parables and commandments, when the great Teacher said to his immature listeners: "I have many things to declare unto you but ye are not ready for them yet;" and finally a stage in which revelation is *first-hand*, and comes to its culmination and complete glory. This last stage had now arrived, the new prophets proclaimed, and God speaks henceforth directly with His people. The Church is now to be a "Church of the Spirit."

This enthusiastic faith was very contagious and spread with amazing rapidity. Whole districts were swept with the fervour. The greatest churchman of the age, Tertullian (born about 145—died 220) was won to its support and he became the foremost exponent of its ideals. He, too, declared that truth is progressive and that revelation "advances." "Nothing is without stages, and the Holy Spirit is ever advancing towards better things."\* He had been one of the greatest organising geniuses in the Church. He had brought the finest legal gifts of the age to bear on the formulation of the ecclesiastical system and now he threw himself with all the intensity of his Carthaginian nature into the movement to create a Church of the Spirit which would supplant the Church of priests and bishops. The Great Church, however, kept on its way unconvinced and the "new prophecy" never succeeded in becoming

\* *On the Veiling of Virgins*, chap. i.

more than a "remnant" —a Little Church of the Spirit, or of the Spirituals, as the Montanists called themselves.

This special remnant stood for some very important truths and principles. They maintained, as we have seen, that revelation is continuous and progressive. They insisted upon the equality of the sexes in all religious matters. Their "prophets" were women as well as men and they allowed their spiritual women to baptise and to administer the Eucharist. They endeavoured to inaugurate a Church wholly composed of spiritual persons in direct communion with God. They were eager to check the growing tendency towards secularisation and they determined to maintain purity of heart and life from the contaminations of the world, and a rigid standard of moral restraint. Their aloofness from the world made it natural for them to emphasise the wickedness of war, as remnant movements have generally done, and one finds in Tertullian's writings some of the most famous of the early testimonies against war.

The most powerful testimony against war which he wrote is found in his treatise called *De Corona Militis*, written in 211 A.D. in defence of a Christian soldier who had refused to wear a garland on the Emperor's birthday. This treatise was written after Tertullian had allied himself with the Montanists, but it must be remembered that he was



strongly opposed to war even in his pre-Montanist period, and he frequently quotes the words of Isaiah about beating swords into ploughs and spears into sickles. The passage to which I have referred above is as follows :

“ And in fact, in order that I may approach the real issue of the military garland, I think it has first to be investigated whether military service is suitable for Christians at all. Besides, what sort of proceeding is it, to deal with incidentals, when the real fault lies with what has preceded them ? Do we believe that the human ‘sacramentum’ may lawfully be added to the divine and that a Christian may give a promise in answer to another master after Christ, and abjure father and mother and every kinsman, whom even the Law commanded to be honoured and loved next to God, and whom the Gospel also thus honoured, putting them above all save Christ only ? Will it be lawful for him to occupy himself with the sword, when the Lord declares that he who uses the sword shall perish by the sword ? And shall the Son of Peace, for whom it will be unfitting even to go to Law, be engaged in a battle ? And shall he, who is not the avenger even of his own wrongs, administer chains and imprisonment and tortures and executions ? Shall he now go on guard for another more than for Christ, or shall he do it on the Lord’s Day, when he does not do it even for Christ ? And

shall he keep watch before temples, which he has renounced ? and take a meal there where the Apostle has forbidden it ?\* And those whom he has put to flight by exorcisms in the daytime, shall he defend them at night, leaning and resting upon the pilum with which Christ's side was pierced ? And shall he carry a flag, too, that is a rival to Christ ? And shall he ask for a watchword from his chief, when he has already received one from God ? And when he is dead, shall he be disturbed by the bugler's trumpet—he who expects to be roused by the trumpet of the angel ? And shall the Christian, who is not allowed to burn incense, to whom Christ has remitted the punishment of fire, be burned according to the discipline of the camp ? And how many other sins can be seen to belong to the functions of camp life—sins which must be explained as a transgression of God's law. The very transference of one's name from the camp of light to the camp of darkness is a transgression. Of course the case is different, if the faith comes subsequently to any who are already occupied in military service, as was, for instance, the case with those whom John admitted to baptism, and with the most believing centurions whom Christ approves and whom Peter instructs : all the same, when faith has been accepted and signed, either the service must be left at once, as has been done by many, or else recourse must

\* An allusion to 1 Cor. viii. 10.



be had to all sorts of cavilling, lest anything be committed against God—any, that is, of the things which are not allowed to Christians outside the army, or lastly that which the faith of Christian civilians has fairly determined upon must be endured for God. For military service will not promise impunity for sins or immunity from martyrdom. The Christian is nowhere anything else than a Christian. . . . With Him, *i.e.*, Christ, the civilian believer is as much a soldier as the believing soldier is a civilian. The state of faith does not admit necessities. No necessity of sinning have they, whose one necessity is that of not sinning. . . . For otherwise even inclination can be pleaded as a necessity, having of course an element of compulsion in it.”

In the following chapter he asks: “Is the laurel of triumph made up of leaves, or of corpses? is it decorated with ribbons, or tombs? is it besmeared with ointments, or with the tears of wives and mothers, perhaps those of some men even who are Christians—for Christ is among the barbarians as well?”

Maximilian, who was martyred at Teveste in Numidia (North Africa) in 295 for refusing to enrol as a soldier, has often been cited as a Montanist conscientious objector. There is no certain evidence that he was a Montanist, and the fact that he was canonised as a saint

\* These passages are taken from Cadoux *The Early Christian Attitude to War* (London, 1919) pp. 110-113.

would positively indicate that the Church did not consider him a member of the hated sect. But he lived in a Montanist region and his attitude toward war strongly reflects that of Tertullian.

When he was twenty-one he was brought before the pro-consul to be initiated into military service. He refused to accept the soldier's badge. The pro-consul endeavoured to change his mind and to remove his scruples, but without effect. "I cannot serve as a soldier," the young man declared, "I cannot do evil; I am a Christian." The pro-consul, in the usual persuasive fashion, told him there were many Christian soldiers in the army and named the names of some of them. "They know what is fitting for them," Maximilian replied, "but I am a Christian, and I cannot do evil." "What evil do they do who serve as soldiers?" asked the pro-consul. "Thou knowest what they do," was the sufficient answer of the unmoved youth, who thereupon was sentenced to death for his faith.

Montanism as a movement, was not altogether an "advance." There were many imperfections inherent in it. It never succeeded in producing any great prophets who could expound in a powerful fashion the essential principles and ideals of spiritual religion. Its "prophecy" was of the trance and ecstatic types. The man went out for the Spirit to come in. It fell easily into an

intense expectation of a millennial age, and some of its prophets actually saw the "new Jerusalem" hovering in the air, about to descend to the earth. It took an excessive bent towards asceticism, considering marriage unsuitable for saints and glorying in the stern conquest of normal appetites. Its range was too narrow and contracted for its leaders to have builded a spiritual Church for the centuries to come. But it uttered an important protest against stiffness and formality in the Church. It made a strong challenge to the alarming growth of ecclesiasticism and secularisation and it boldly announced the reality of the living, speaking, revealing Spirit. However else they may have failed they stood the test of martyrdom with a fearlessness never surpassed by the members of any other remnant. Their books were destroyed; they themselves were thrown to the beasts or were burned up in their houses and meeting-places; they were exterminated as though they had been dangerous pests. Their story has come down to us almost entirely in the writings of their enemies and traducers. One narrative of martyrdom, told by a sympathiser and friend of these "brave and blessed martyrs," a story still fragrant with the ardour of holy lives, has come down to us, and reveals to our generation their constancy in suffering and their faith in continuous revelation.—*The Passion of St. Perpetua*.\*

\* *The Acts of the Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas.*

The Montanists have often been called "Second Century Quakers." They were and they were not. They testified to the fact of the presence of the Spirit of God in the souls of men, they called for a life that answered to profession, they championed the equality of women with men and they undertook to build a spiritual Church, but they show the limitations of their time and age, the false hopes and expectations of chiliastic dreamers and the erratic traits of most ecstasies. They could hardly have disciplined and spiritualised the new pagan races which were overrunning the world, they lacked the necessary constructive power to be sure transmitters of the torch of truth. Their mission was a mission of protest and challenge and they performed it. They died, but they brought once more to consciousness the essential truth that God is Spirit, ever present, ever living, ever revealing, ever teaching, and the source of all spiritual authority and power. This truth many times waned and grew dim, but it never wholly died away again and was revived repeatedly by the spiritual successors of the Little Church of the Spirit.



## V

### A FOURTH CENTURY REMNANT—THE DONATISTS

IN Donatism we shall study an interesting attempt, repeated many times in later history, to resist the secularisation of Christianity, and, on its positive side, to secure a holy Church, a Church of saints. The leaders of the movement were convinced that the pure seed of truth and life, planted in the world by Christ, was in danger of being lost through the growing tendency in the Church to make compromises with the world and to adjust to the encroachments of the State. They represented an attitude of rigour, a puritanic spirit, a determination not to level down the ideals of the Church, even if their position of protest involved a division of Christendom into two types of Churches.

The deeper issues were not well defined at first, but they became clarified as the implications of the two opposing parties were thought out and debated, until with the course of time the fundamental nature of the Church itself became the real issue. The controversy began over the status of Christian officials who had failed to stand the test of persecution—the persecution under Diocletian (Emperor from 284 to 305). The

strict party, later called Donatists, insisted that a surrender of faith under persecution indicated an original weakness of faith. The Diocletian persecutors demanded the officials of the Churches to deliver up their sacred books and writings. If they yielded and conformed to the demand they escaped unharmed; if they refused to yield they were tortured, mutilated and, in some cases, killed. Those who yielded were called *traditors*, and it was against these *traditors* that the strict party opened its fight. These early puritans glorified martyrdom; they welcomed the sifting tests which showed who was true Christian and who was sham Christian; they claimed that the real Church must be limited to those who could stand the uttermost tests and that no others should be counted as belonging in the circle of the faithful.

There was much that was petty and personal in the century of controversy and we shall not find one side wholly right and the other side wholly wrong, nor one party magnanimous and spiritual while the other was essentially mean and crude. Both sides were partly right and partly wrong; both raised half-truths to the height of eternal realities, and the contest was attended with much tragedy and havoc; but in spite of this the aims of this particular "remnant" are quite worth the attention of the modern world and will repay our study.



The controversy arose in the first instance over the consecration of a bishop to succeed Mensurius, bishop of Carthage, who died in 311. Cæcilianus was elected to the vacant see. He was "consecrated" for his office by Felix, bishop of Aptunga. Cæcilianus had many opponents who were determined that he should not become bishop. They forthwith attacked the validity of his consecration on the ground that the bishop of Aptunga who consecrated him was a *traditor*, and therefore no true bishop. It was further rightly or wrongly asserted that Caecilianus himself was a *traditor*. In any case the opponents proceeded to pronounce the see of Carthage still vacant and they elected Marjorinus bishop and had him forthwith consecrated. Thus the conflict opened. The details of the controversy may be left to slumber and we shall not need here to discuss at length the minor personalities who figure in the schismatic struggle. It is enough for our purpose that Donatus, often called by his sympathisers, "the great," was the leader of the "remnant" party. He succeeded Marjorinus as Donatist bishop of Carthage in 315 and gave his name to the movement. Augustine of Hippo stands out as the great opponent of the "remnant" towards the end of the struggle nearly a century later.

North Africa throughout the conflict was the centre of the controversy, though

Donatism was never closely confined to one area. It became, with the development of issues, a widespread demand and a rallying movement for a Church separated from the influences and contaminations of the world. The conversion of Constantine, which for the time ended persecution, seemed at first a great providential event. The conversion of the famous warrior was quickly glorified by legends and to the vivid imagination of the time he seems to have been met, as St. Paul had been, and turned from the old course of his life into a divinely chosen path. However the conversion may be explained it worked a major revolution in Christian history. It opened the door at once for the greatest "expansion" of Christianity that had ever occurred. The imperial head of the world was now himself a Christian instead of an opponent. He not only proclaimed the toleration of Christianity, he further indicated that acceptance of "the faith" was the sure road to secular promotion. Multitudes flocked in short order to the Christian standard. The old gods were abandoned and the God of the Christians was adopted with the ease of a popular election. The only trouble was that the transfer was too easy and too superficial. Many of the new converts had only a thin veneer of Christianity, beneath the covering they were as pagan as before the change which was hardly more than a change of name. Old gods and

goddesses became new saints. Old-pagan festivals were celebrated much as before, but with new phrases and terminology.

There was occasion enough for protest against compromise with the world and with the customs of the empire. It was certainly a time to call for vigilance, and there was real need to challenge the drift of the age. It was well to have somebody stand vigorously for a pure Church and for a holy community of the faith, in the period of slackness of standards and of adjustment to the world. The Donatists began with a protest against *traditors* who saved themselves in a hard crisis by yielding to the demands of the world, and they went forward gradually to the radical position that no religious services in the Church can be efficacious unless they are performed by spiritual persons. And that the measure of the spiritual power of the Church is to be found in the spiritual quality of the membership, especially of its ministry.

They emphasised the importance of the personal, the *subjective* side, in all religious matters. They dwelt upon the interior state. A man might save himself by a surrender of his soul's faith and afterwards he might rise to a great height as an administrator of church affairs. *They* could not forget the blemish which marked the soul of the man, while others thought only of the outward success which had marked his career.

It was understood that great leaders in the Church were often morally unsound persons. It was the growing custom to make little of the weaknesses and failings of individual men on the theory that ordination carried with it an objective power, a kind of magic, which made the sacraments effective and the sacerdotal performances efficacious regardless of the real character of the person who performed the acts. The Donatists were the persistent enemies of that theory. They were against the entire system of *objective effects*, which was transforming the Church into a great mechanism for mediating grace.

St. Augustine, the most determined opponent of the Donatists, in his powerful assaults upon their position, became the advocate and defender of the Catholic Church as the indispensable instrument of salvation and the mediator of grace to the lost world. There is, he argued, only one Church, the august and authoritative *ecclesia* which Christ came to found and which, by uninterrupted succession through ordination, can be traced back to the apostles as the first bishops. No one can possess Jesus Christ the Head of the Church, nor participate in His grace, unless he belongs to Christ's Body, which is the Church. The sacraments of the Church, he contended, belonged inseparably to this mysterious body and through them grace is mediated to men. They are efficacious



through the magical power bestowed upon the priestly celebrant by his ordination and they *work* independently of the subjective disposition, either of the recipient or the celebrant. They are "holy" in themselves, when they are rightly performed by the ordained mediator.

This is the objective theory in its naked simplicity. It is presented and defended in Augustine's famous books against the Donatists: *On Baptism*; *Answers to Petilian* (a contemporary Donatist) and *On the Correction of the Donatists*.

In this view the "holiness" of the Church is superior to and independent of the holiness of character in the actual lives of the membership of the Church. The Church, spelled with a capital, is an indescribable entity, above the empirical church, a superman affair, which has an efficacy all its own, unhampered by the blunders and moral weaknesses of its human ministrants.

It was against this *objective* construction that the Donatists were arrayed. Holiness for them was actual holiness of character. It was something concrete and incarnate in a living person. They were calling, however feebly, for a religion of life—for moral effects. They proclaimed the necessity of becoming another man—a new and heavenly-minded man—if one expected to exert spiritual power and influence upon others. The ordained person, according to them, is not made a



superman by his ordination. He is raised higher than himself only through moral and spiritual agencies. He is what his moral character makes him. The efficacy of his ministry is settled by what he is. The Church can be holy only if the members are. The whole is equal to the sum of the actual parts. Its stock of grace is not an objective deposit to be mysteriously drawn upon and mediated ; it is measured by the dynamic quality of life in the organic fellowship which constitutes the Church. The Donatists often grasped their central idea inadequately and they were like most "puritans" more concerned with negations than with affirmations, but they were trying to be the champions of a living Church of transformed and spiritualised men and women, who have become children of God and recipients of the Holy Spirit.

They often lacked consistency. They were opposed to all dependence on the secular state and yet they eagerly appealed to Constantine to secure his support and induce him to validify their claim. They held a very lofty theory of holiness of life but they did not always preserve it in their difficult relations with men. They found it very hard work to love their opponents and they sometimes used methods of persuasion of an unspiritual type. They endeavoured to eliminate the spurious supplements to spiritual religion and to return to the pure word of life

and to the convincing force of actual goodness. In theory they elevated the Sermon on the Mount and called upon men to live and to love like the pattern Figure, Jesus Christ. But the fourth century in Carthaginian Africa was a difficult epoch in which to build a literal kingdom of God, and even Donatists sometimes forgot their lofty ideals in the stern conflict with the actual and the practical. It was worth something to have a clear voice raised, in this crisis of compromise and secularisation, against the danger of taking the line of least resistance ; and we owe a debt of gratitude to those hard-pressed Donatists for their endeavour to preserve in the world at least a remnant of Christians who undertook to make religion consist of purity of heart and of the moral power of life.

## VI

### “ THE RELIGIOUS ”

THE separatist movements which we have been following in the two previous chapters were both protests against the secularization of Christianity. The tendency to conform to the standards of the world, to adjust by compromise to the prevailing ways of life, to translate Christianity through Greek philosophy and Roman organisation, began earlier than most persons usually suppose and, though Christianity never levelled all the way down, the conforming tendency carried the Church very far away from its primitive ideals. Outwardly the Church grew stronger and more potent each year ; inwardly its conquests were not so evident. The experience of God as the surest of possessions, the consciousness of Christ's presence as the life of the fellowship had waned. The demonstration of the Spirit was not felt as it formerly had been. Instead of aiming to have these glowing experiences men were content to get on with substitutes. An intellectual theory about the Trinity slipped into the place which had once been filled by the warm and intimate knowledge of God manifested in experience. The growing emphasis upon intellectual formulation

of Dogma steadily pushed direct experience into the background and " thinking " rose to a place distinctly superior to inward communion and worship. The Church even in the second and third centuries had discovered the immense possibilities of expansion and it had already acquired imperial ambitions. If it were to carry its gospel of salvation to all men and to all lands, it must use the languages of the world and the culture of the world, and consequently it must take as well as give. The Montanists and the Donatists had suddenly awakened to what was happening. They saw the original purity of life vanishing. They saw the Church steadily approaching the ways of the world. They were convinced that Christians were to be holy, were to live like Christ, were to practise the ideals of the Gospel, but they were equally convinced that it was not being done. They tried, but they tried in vain, to stem the waxing tide of worldliness. They made their valiant venture to restore the Church of the living God and to keep it separate from the soilure, the corruption and the contamination of the empire.

We shall now consider another venture of a wholly different type—the attempt of the hermits and monks to create a spiritual remnant within the Church. They proposed to remain in it but not to be like it in spiritual quality. Without separating from the communion and fellowship of the Church they

would make a convincing demonstration of what Christ means a Christian to be—they would be *par excellence* “the religious,” the peculiar people of God. They resolved to flee utterly from the world, to renounce it, to have done with it and with all its ways. They would know nothing, aspire to nothing which earth could give. They would live without home and family. They would not marry nor give in marriage. They would obliterate natural instincts. They would forego the blessedness of human love and the joy and intimacy of family ties. They would turn all their powers Godward. They would live as though only God besides themselves were real in the universe. He should have them wholly and utterly and they would have Him as their only treasure. They would maintain in all its undimmed lustre the saintly quality of the Christ-directed life which had been the passion of the first followers. They would live not to eat nor to make gains, nor to accumulate even knowledge, nor to govern others, but to adore and contemplate God. They would flee not only from the world but they would flee even from the visible Church with its compromises. They would be God’s men alone and they would keep holiness alive on earth, in their lonely cells, though it might vanish everywhere else. It is impossible not to feel a thrill over the heroism of this experiment. Self-crucifixion could go no further. This



was the climax of renunciation. This was the limit of what the volition of man could do to exhibit the fact that Christ expected His followers to be unlike other people.

This world-flight, for the love of God, was at first a feature of Eastern Christianity. It had its beginnings in Egypt, where pre-Christian sects had tried the same experiment even before the Church was born. It was, however, probably not an imitative movement. It was a spontaneous attempt on the part of devoted souls to achieve the religious ideal, which under the degenerating influences of the period of Constantine was in grave danger of being utterly lost. The fourth century, with its fierce Arian controversy and its fusion and amalgamation with paganism, was a time to send serious souls into desperate action. We know few details about the origin of this great withdrawal and retreat from the world ; we do not possess with any certainty the names of the first leaders, who went out not knowing whither they went. We do, however, know that early in the fourth century a vast host of volunteers had gone out into solitude to live in poverty, in silence and in chastity as they believed Christ meant men to live. There was always a strain of fanaticism in oriental hermit life. Its votaries tried the impossible. Some of them endeavoured like Mogli to live among the wild creatures of the forest and to sever all contact and fellowship with human

kind. Some lived, or tried to live, on high pillars, raised far above contact with earth, exposed to sun and storm. Others formed communities in which they practised obedience to stern rules of discipline and undertook to create a holy fellowship, as a model for a better age.

In the West the world-flight movement began much later and was always of a different type from the Eastern forms. It was more thoroughly organised and much more organically bound up with the life and development of the Church than was the case in the East. St. Benedict of Nursia in Italy in the sixth century was one of the great creators of monasticism in the West. He saw the dangers attaching to the hermit life, to isolation, solitude and absence of occupation. He linked together inseparably worship and labour. He provided for ideal communities, organised under the severest discipline, in which men should divide their time between work in the fields and quiet contemplation of God. As the movement developed and made its appeal to men some of the finest spirits in Europe turned to this method of life. These early monks, in the days when high faith and sincerity characterised the fellowships, cleared forests, drained marshes, conquered stubborn mountain sides and turned waste stretches of country into beautiful fields and arable soil. They also learned to cultivate other kinds of soil. They created

schools, preserved ancient literature, kept Greek learning alive, nourished a love of poetry and song, and were the purveyors of whatever culture there was in the Dark Ages.

The Western monastery almost from the first became the nursery of the greatest leaders of the Church. It was never a thing apart, after the manner of the Eastern hermits. It was an *ecclesiola in ecclesia*, a little Church within the Church, feeding its intensified life into the larger body. Many of the greatest Popes formed their religious ideals in the monastery. Many of the most powerful administrators in the Church gained their skill and insight and constructive power in these quiet communities of worship, labour and discipline.

Unfortunately this close and intimate affiliation with the world-church tended to secularise the monastery itself. Ambition invaded its sacred enclosure. The traits of life that marked the great community gradually crept in and revealed themselves in the little community. It was not possible to make monastery walls impervious. Furthermore, human nature is a very virile thing. It is difficult indeed to kill it out without actually killing the body. It kept asserting itself in these little remnant groups. Appetites that were supposed to be obliterated reasserted themselves. It was hard to keep keyed up continually to the height of the pure ideal.

The sag of nature was an ominous fact, so real that sometimes it seemed as though diabolical forces were added to the native downward pull. There were periods when a universal degeneracy seemed to affect the world, leaving no centres quite free and threatening the complete failure of the Christian experiment. But again and again reforms were inaugurated in the monastic groups. Devoted leaders appeared in hours of crisis, called for new ventures of renunciation, led their little bands of selected volunteers farther into the wilderness for severer discipline and for more heroic efforts of dedication to God.

It was the true remnant method which they tried. They aimed to cultivate a little band of purer quality, that would build a specimen Zion in the fastnesses of their retreat, and then endeavour to carry their stricter life and purer ideals back into the looser monasteries and into the secularised Church. The long story is full of light and shade. We are apt to think of monks as fat, lazy, useless beings. We turn from the whole experiment and suppose it to have been a vast moral failure. No doubt it was an attempt to do the impossible. It was always hampered by ignorance of psychological and sociological laws of life and it pursued a mistaken conception of holiness, but it is one of the bravest ventures of the race, and it was never wholly failure. More than once



the monastery proved to be the garrison and sanctuary of the most precious ideals of the faith. It gave the Church not only its purest saints, but also its wisest leaders, and it did in some fashion at least what should be expected of a remnant. It raised the spiritual level of the wider community for which it lived and prayed.



## VII

### THE SPIRITUAL FRANCISCANS

THE genius and inspiration of Francis of Assisi created a marvellous new type of remnant, both like and unlike that of the monastery. No other attempt to reproduce primitive apostolic Christianity, with its grace, its charm, its radiance, its joy, its abandon, its dedication, its unlimited sacrifice, its sense of God and its absolute confidence in the conquering power of love, has come quite so close to the original model as did this Franciscan experiment of the thirteenth century. It is true, of course, that Francis was, like everybody else in his century, devoid of historical sense and unable to reconstruct the actual scenery and circumstance of the primitive group. He carried in his mind the picture of the Galilean circle which tradition and mediæval ideals had fashioned. There was in it a tinge of asceticism and a glorification of poverty, which did not essentially belong to the Christianity of the Gospels, but the heart of the Franciscan venture is always to be felt in its restoration of love, sacrifice and joy to the first place in religion. "O Lord, my Saviour," Francis prayed, "I ask two favours before I die. Let me feel in my soul, in my

body even, all the bitter pains which thou hast felt. And in my heart let me feel that immeasurable love which made Thee, Son of God, endure such sufferings for us poor sinners."

Like so many other things in the world, the Franciscan movement was, or at least soon became, a mixture, a compromise, a fusion. One of the great struggles in the life of John Wyclif was his unending fight against the Friars, and every student of history and literature knows that something marred and spoiled the beautiful creation which Francis made. It is a long and complicated tragedy. We can deal here only with the Franciscan ideal found in its purity in the spirit of Francis himself and carried on with mingled success and failure by spiritual successors who tried to preserve the precious creation of the founder.

What Francis tried to do was to restore, to reproduce, original Christianity, to make it live again in the actual world of thirteenth century Italy. He saw, as all the prophets throughout the Christian era have seen, that the existing Church was an inadequate system. It failed to minister vitally and in refreshing, recreative ways to the life of the vast masses of humanity. It too often gave a stone for bread. It substituted fear for joy. It had lost its sense of mission as the builder of a kingdom of God in this world of men, here, and it was occupied instead

with its mission as the bearer of the keys to the world beyond. With all its grandeur and imperial authority the Church was not carrying on nor fulfilling the work of love and redemption which Christ had inaugurated, and Francis' sensitive soul discovered that inner fact, and he flung himself unreservedly into the task of filling up what was behind of the sufferings of Christ for men and of rediscovering and recharting the trail of life which led back home to God.

His story is an indivisible blend of fact and legend, of biography and poetry, of history and imagination. Nobody can ever completely disentangle the threads which have been woven together, and decide with certainty between the warp of historical fact and the woof of poetic fancy. The Francis whom we know and love, the "real" St. Francis for us, is the charming personality which poetry and art, legend and literature have passed on to us. He was born in 1182, the son of a rich merchant of Assisi. He lived a gay, joyous life as boy and youth. He loved and fought like the other rich young men of his time. He had a round of triumphs and successes and he also had his taste of adversity, having endured a year of captivity as a prisoner of war in Perugia. Then came a great upheaval in his inner life, strange and mysterious, as such religious shifts of level always are. "I am thinking of taking a bride, richer and nobler

and fairer than ye have ever seen," is the way this young troubadour of divine love expresses his dedication to the call of religion. In the little Church of St. Damian, where he was praying before the crucifix one day he suddenly found that he could not take his eyes away from the eyes of Jesus. They seemed to look through him and to hold him fixed. At the same time the figure on the cross seemed to be bending forward and speaking to him, and to be asking for the consecration of his life. Somewhat later, after he had renounced his human father, Pietro Bernadone, in order to belong wholly to his heavenly Father, and was at work as a labourer repairing the church of the Portiuncula in the outskirts of Assisi, he heard the priest at Mass read for the gospel lesson the passage: "Wherever ye go, preach saying, 'the Kingdom of God is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils. Freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither silver nor gold nor brass in your purses, neither scrip, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor staff, for the labourer is worthy of his meat." It seemed as though Christ stood there in the place of the priest and spoke these words directly to him. He had heard his "call." He had found his "bride."

Henceforth he *practised* poverty as his way of life. He became God's "poor little brother," possessing nothing which he could



call his own, wearing a rough coarse garment tied with a rope girdle and going forth like the apostles to preach the good news of salvation. The multitudes flocked to hear this new and wonderful preacher, who spoke to their hearts and who made the love of God absolutely real. His own *conviction* awakened conviction in others and men from the city and country began to join him in the practice of poverty.

About the year 1210 the Pope granted permission for him to form an Order of Poor Brothers, with one simple rule, namely, that they should lead "the apostolic life." They were to form a remnant within the Church, consisting of those who were ready to live like the first apostles and be done for ever with ambition, rivalry and the pursuit of self-interests.

A second Order followed, a very few years later, composed of women, who chose a similar life to that of the "brothers." They were called "Clarisses," after the name of Clara, the noble woman whose life had been reached by Francis, and who had dedicated herself to the same kind of life as that upon which he had entered. Still later a third Franciscan Order was formed unlike the other two in this, that the members of it might live at home, pursue the normal course of daily occupations and "follow Christ" without tearing up the roots of their life from the soil in which they were growing. It was



a serious attempt to carry religion literally into everyday life. These "Tertiaries," as they were called, were of both sexes. They were not asked to give up houses and lands, home and family. They were asked rather to penetrate all life with the fragrant spirit of love and to practise renunciation and self-sacrifice in the midst of occupations. Its members were forbidden to bear arms in offensive warfare, and until the rule was altered by a later Pope they might not engage in *any kind* of war. Even after the alteration was made in the rules a vassal Tertiary could still always refuse to render military service to his suzerain. The movement cultivated a beautiful group spirit, bound the artisans and working men together into brotherhood guilds and tended to disintegrate the feudal system.

The spirit of St. Francis was utterly opposed to enmity and hate. It was a spirit which removed the seeds of war and did away with the occasion for it. Instead of leading a crusade against the Mohammedans and killing multitudes of them in order to recover the sepulchre of Christ from the infidels, he went unarmed among them as a Christian missionary and absolutely trusted to the protecting power of love. It was one of the greatest "miracles" of the saint's life that he could reverse the entire practice of Europe, and the whole conception of the Church toward these pagan peoples and could go out,

and did go out, in the immense faith that love would *work* among them as well as he had discovered that it did work in his own Italy.

What he thought of love as a method of life is beautifully told in one of the stories of *The Little Flowers*—the one on “perfect joy.” It tells how he and Brother Leo were travelling on a bitterly cold day in early spring to the little church of St. Mary of the Angels, and as they walked Francis was telling his friend that they could not expect to find perfect joy where most people tried to find it.

Finally, in answer to his insistent question, “Wherein then does perfect joy consist” ? Francis said :

“When we come to St. Mary of the Angels, all soaked as we are with rain and numbed with cold and besmeared with mud and tormented with hunger, and the porter comes in anger and says, ‘Who are Ye ?’ and we say, ‘We are two of your brethren,’ and he says, ‘Ye be no true men ; nay, ye be two rogues that gad about deceiving the world and robbing the alms of the poor ; get ye gone,’ and thereat he shuts the door, and makes us stand without in the snow and the rain, cold and hungered, till night-fall ; if there withal we patiently endure such wrong and such cruelty, without being disquieted, and with patience and charity—Oh, Brother Leo, write that herein is perfect joy. And if we, still constrained by hunger, cold, and night, knock yet again—and pray him with much weeping

for the love of God that he will open and let us in, and he yet more enraged should say : ' These be importunate knaves, I will pay them well as they deserve,' and should rush out with a knotty stick and throw us upon the ground, and beat us with all the knots of that stick : if with patience and gladness we suffer all these things, thinking on the pains of the blessed Christ—Oh, Brother Leo, write that herein is perfect joy !—Above all graces and gifts that Christ giveth to His beloved, is the grace and gift willingly for His love to endure pains and insults and shame and want. In the cross of tribulation and affliction we may boast since this is ours ; and, therefore saith the apostle, I would not that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The great tragedy of Francis' life was the gradual transformation of his Order to make it fit the schemes and policies of the Church. He had agreed when the Order was first founded that it should always submit to the Church as its supreme authority. But " the poor little man " had never suspected what lay involved in that seemingly harmless promise. With a sudden start he awoke to discover that his beloved Order was no longer free. It could be " apostolic " only according to the papal interpretation of apostolic, and this interpretation was quite different from his inspired vision of apostolic life. His own little band became divided,

some of them eager to follow their leader even to death for the pure way of love and poverty and some determined to adjust to the demands of the secularised Church. The last part of Francis' life with its pains and illnesses, its passion and suffering, its inward crucifixion, and outward stigmata, can be understood only in the light of his bitter experiences of stress and strain. He held the order together during his life and avoided a "break"; but even before his death in 1226 the Order was seriously altered from the ideal of Francis' youthful dream, and the conquest of it for worldly ends and for ecclesiastical aims and purposes went steadily on.

There existed, however, a staunch and determined party within the Order which was resolved at all costs to preserve the apostolic purity of the movement. Brother Leo, a beautiful character like Francis himself, was the leading figure in this party of the "Spirituals," or "the Spiritual Franciscans." This devoted band stood for strict observance of the original rule of poverty and simplicity and apostolic life, while on the other hand the larger body was for accepting the "softer way," the easier course, proposed by papal dispensations. It was an intense struggle for supremacy, a rivalry of ideals, a struggle which is always implicitly in evidence in the early Franciscan literature. The forces of the Church were on the side of the party of adjustment and the



"Spirituals" were, of course, doomed to a life of suffering and outward defeat, but there can be little doubt that Francis himself would have taken his place with those who were the champions of the ideal of poverty.\*

There were many branches and types of "the Spirituals," differentiated by the leaders or by the conditions of the country where they "flourished." The most famous branch of them in the history of heresy was perhaps the group known as "the Fraticelli," or "Little Brothers," who were originally Tuscan "Spirituals" and who were treated by the church as recalcitrant heretics. Another famous group revived the hopes of Joachim of Flora and proclaimed an "Eternal Gospel." In one form or another, sometimes in isolation and sometimes merged with other rebel movements, they persisted down into Reformation times. Their position varied with the varying attitudes of the successive Popes, and with the changing ideals of the generalates within the Order. For a brief season "the Spirituals" enjoyed a triumph under Pope Celestin V. (1294), a pious monk who was unfitted for the storms of the world and who quickly abdicated the papacy and returned to the quiet of his cell; and they had an earlier period of outward success while John of Palma—a man "full of power, wisdom and God's grace"—was master-

\* *The Mirror of Perfection* was written to expound the ideals of the "Spirituals."



general of the Franciscan Order, from 1247 to 1257, and who endeavoured to bring the Order back to the spiritual glory of its first love.

With the exception of these two brief periods, "the Spirituals" were hunted as though they had been venomous beasts, and subjected to a persecution amounting to a reign of terror. "I had rather receive and shelter a band of fornicators than these men," is the comment of one ecclesiastic in reference to two of these devoted followers of the Franciscan ideal. To refuse to drift with the tide and to decline to accept the softer standards of life proposed by the papal authority, and to stand out for the apostolic way adopted by Francis, ensured everywhere hate, persecution, suffering and death. This hard course the little remnant of spiritual Franciscans took with conscientious bravery, and in doing so they endeavoured to keep alive the spirit and the ideals of God's poor little man of Assisi, whose call and mission had been to "restore Christianity" and to exhibit the apostolic life.

## VIII

### A REMNANT OF THE TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES

THOSE who are eager for the unification of all Christendom into one undivided body, and who assume that forthwith the Church will become the mighty spiritual power of their hopes will be somewhat disillusioned if they will study with historical insight the nature and character of the Church in the period of its greatest unification. It is true, no doubt, that the world has learned much about the essentials of spiritual religion during the long centuries of division and that a unification now would be vastly different from the massive, imperial, authoritative unification in the twelfth century. But in any case unification by itself is no solution. So long as Christianity is thought of in terms of doctrine, or in terms of sacraments, or in terms of sacerdotal authority, or as a sacred and unalterable scheme for securing salvation in a world beyond the stars, unification is practically impossible and would be a misfortune if accomplished. As fast on the other hand as we realise that Christianity is a way of living a full, complete spiritual life in correspondence with the life of God, and as rich in

variety as life everywhere always is, we become unconcerned about unification, or at least we become much more concerned about something else. Uniformity would under all circumstances be a calamity, while unity is seen to be an inherent feature of genuine normal spiritual life under the inspiration of Christ and the guidance of the Spirit.

The Church seemed at the opening of the twelfth century to hold the future in its hand. Its authority was unchallenged. Its grandeur and splendour impressed every beholder. Its centralised power surpassed that of any other imperial organisation the world has ever seen. It controlled the destiny of every man and woman. It held the keys to the world beyond. It assumed that it could open or shut the gates to heaven or hell. It claimed to be the sole mediator of celestial grace. But its structure was not ethically based. Its power was not a moral and spiritual power. It was not grounded in the eternal nature of things. Its promises were not backed and guaranteed by the unalterable laws of the moral universe. Its ecclesiastical hierarchy, which claimed and possessed unparalleled authority, was morally weak and decrepit. Immorality, either flagrant or subtly concealed, was honey-combing the celibate priesthood. The sin of simony was eating out its heart and life. The unethical use of indulgences as a source of wealth was working and was bound to work moral havoc. Sooner or later the

Church would be forced to reckon with the native hunger of the human soul and would have to square up its accounts with the unescapable moral forces of the world.

These deeper issues began to show themselves at the very moment when the outward authority of the Church seemed supreme and forever safe. Men began to ask whether this imperial organisation was really ministering in a genuine way to the inmost needs of the soul. They were conscious of something stirring within themselves of which the Church took little account and they were aware of strivings of heart to which the ordained priest could not adequately speak. Gradually these serious honest people began to seek their salvation in their own way. They ventured forth on lonely quests for truth, risking not only their soul's welfare, but taking their life in their hands as well. They were the "heretics" of these two wonderful centuries. They appeared under many names, they took many forms of revolt, they exhibited a great variety of solutions to the world-old problem, but in one way or another they were all trying to revive and restore apostolic religion. There has ever since been an unending battle with "heresy," and there never can be again an "undisturbed" Church until there is a genuinely spiritual one.

I have already spoken of the Franciscan attempt to restore the Christian ideal. I dealt with it somewhat out of the order of



historical sequence, first because it fitted so closely in with the monastic movement treated in the chapter before, and secondly because it did not rise to the degree of a revolt until it reached its later stage when the "Fracticelli" and other rebel branches of "the Spiritual Franciscans" emerged. Our present chapter will consider a movement which was essentially anti-sacerdotal and fundamentally rebel in its attitude toward the ecclesiastical Church—the Vaudois, or Waldensian "remnant." The ancient tradition that the people grouped under the name Vaudois or Waldenses had had an unbroken history back to apostolic days, and that in the retreats of the Alpine valleys they had preserved the original gospel uncontaminated and uncorrupted has little support except in the sphere of creative imagination. It was in fact only at a later time that the members of this remnant found their homes in the Alpine valleys of the Vaudois. It does, however, seem probable that the spirit and attitude which found expression in the Donatist movement—a spirit of strong protest against a secularised Church more or less fused with the State—never actually died out. It was constantly recurring and making itself felt now in one form of protest and now in another. The Paulicians, the Cathari, the Albigenses, with their numerous variants, connected with the far past and were all movements which rallied their adherents to



stricter ways of life and to determined opposition to the immorality of the clergy, and to the sacerdotalism and secularity of the Church. And while they do not explain the origin of the Waldenses they nevertheless exerted a positive influence upon their development and upon their aims and ideals.

The movement as a definite and unique religious venture owed its origin to a rich merchant of Lyons on the Rhone, named Peter Waldo. About the year 1173, Waldo passed through a great religious crisis which altered the whole outlook of his life. The spiritual advisers with whom he took counsel turned his thoughts to "poverty" as the divine way to bring the Church out of the evils of the world into purity and perfection. It was the spiritual panacea of the age. Waldo accepted the advice, took literally the words of Jesus: "If thou wilt be perfect, sell all thou hast and give to the poor, and come and follow me," and made forthwith the great renunciation. He was, however, not as gentle and obedient as was his successor in the way of poverty, Francis of Assisi. He was deeply impressed with the failure of the Church and he possessed in high degree the reforming attitude and temper. He saturated his mind with the teachings of the Gospels and with the words of Jesus. He caught the primitive attitude toward the poor, the common people, and he became filled with pity and compassion for the great neglected masses. A

genuine social spirit was born in him and he resolved to carry the message of life, the good news of divine love, to the people who laboured and were heavy laden. Convinced as he was that ordination worked no moral or spiritual miracle in any priest's life, he decided to go out as an unordained layman, and to make the experiment of telling what he knew out of the Gospels and out of his own experiences. He used some of his consecrated wealth to pay for having parts of the Bible translated into the vernacular speech, and instead of giving only bread to the poor he gave them copies of the Gospels where they could find the Bread of Life, and he went about himself interpreting the gospel-message in its native simplicity. He gathered a little band of helpers, composed of those who shared his point of view and who were ready to throw in their lot with him, and these "poor men of Lyons" undertook to inaugurate a new era of apostolic life and of lay preaching to men and women who toiled with their hands.

They came almost at once into collision with the officials of the Church. They were informed that they were usurping functions which did not belong to them. They were told that they must confine their labours to secular tasks and not cast pearls before swine, as they were doing. Waldo appealed to his copy of the precious Gospels for his authority, but all in vain. He was forbidden to preach, and his "poor men" were warned to desist.

With great boldness Waldo quoted the apostolic words : " We must obey God rather than men," and applied them to their own case. This, of course, meant a break with the existing order and from this time onward " the poor men of Lyons " were " outcasts " in the eyes of the Church, and had to take the hazards and penalties of being " heretics."

The opposition and persecution which attached to their position steadily forced them into a more critical attitude toward the hierarchy, carried them farther in their hostility to the entire " system " and eventually differentiated them into a separate " remnant Church," consisting of those who made the Gospels the basis of their way of living.

They perfected a very simple organisation of their own, with almost no distinction between clergy and laity. A certain number of them devoted all their time to the propagation of the gospel, and these more " perfect " members naturally had greater authority and influence. They received no human ordination and they supported themselves by simple occupations, such as cobbling, tinkering, peddling and the simple doctoring which prevailed in this century. These occupations enabled them to obtain an entrance into homes without exciting suspicion, and after they had secured the *entrée* they used the opportunity to propagate their religion. By such means and methods they

spread rapidly, especially in the rural districts, and soon became a real menace to the unity and authority of the Church.

They levelled their main attacks against the unethical aspects of the Church. They challenged especially the theory that the ordained priest could work the miracle of trans-substantiation by the gift of a magical power conferred upon him by his ordination. They insisted, on the contrary, that all spiritual gifts and all power of ministry attach to moral and spiritual qualities in the life of the person himself. A priest is effective in his ministrations in exact proportion to the purity and moral power of his life. If he is living in sin no ordination can enable him to mediate divine grace. In short the Church is the Church of the living God only in so far as its members, both clergy and laity, live the life that fits the teaching of its Founder. They also stoutly attacked indulgences as a wicked invention for securing money from the poor for no return. They further declared that purgatory and prayers and offerings to saints are vain and *expensive superstitions*. They would have none of them and they aroused the common people to an attitude of revolt against these invented schemes for exploiting the simple.

But the most characteristic feature of this intense remnant was its emphasis upon a life in conformity with the Gospels. They were Tolstoyan in their interpretations of the



primitive teachings. They took them literally and proposed to practise them as though they were meant to affect daily life. "Thou shalt not swear," "thou shalt not lie," "thou shalt not kill," became for them absolute commands. For the first time on a large scale the Waldenses formed a Christian Society—a remnant Church—the first condition of which was strict obedience to the law of life set forth in the New Testament, especially in the Sermon on the Mount. No threats, no torture, no form of death would induce a "perfected Poor Man" to take an oath or to take a human life or to engage in war. The heresy hunters learned to recognise them as heretics by the moral purity of their lives and by their strict conformity to their lofty standard. To avoid oaths, lies and fraud exposed one to suspicion! The Waldenses were the main influence in introducing into religious circles in Europe an intense conscientiousness respecting oaths, manner of dress and speech, and the taking of life for any purpose. The current once set flowing has never stopped. It disappears only to reappear. It has been a feature of most of the small, strictly moral sects in Reformation times, and it almost certainly is a contribution from this remnant of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.



## IX

### A REMNANT IN THE RHINE VALLEY

THIS chapter will be devoted to the groups or societies of mystics which were formed in the Rhine Valley in the fourteenth century, and were known as "Friends of God."

Mysticism as such is not a "remnant" movement. It is a more or less universal aspect of religion. It is religion in its intensified and dynamic state as an immediate experience of the Divine Presence revealing itself to the individual soul. Sometimes the mystical experience seems like a sudden invasion of consciousness. Energies and forces of life not usually felt come flooding in as do tides of the sea into the inlets of the coast. The whole personality seems to be fused, charged and vitalised through immediate *contact* with the central Life of the universe. These experiences are frequently attended with striking psychological effects. The person may feel himself enveloped in light, or he may hear a voice communicating with him or he may reveal remarkable automatic activities of a variety of types. Or, on the other hand, there may be no unusual phenomena, only a sense of calm, of fortification and of complete certainty of God.

Sometimes the mystical experience is not sudden ; it is rather the normal effect of faith and trust and confidence, rising to a stage of fellowship, intercourse and correspondence with God. One may hardly know when the personal relationship began ; one may only know that it is really operating now. In fact many times the coming of God into the life is discovered in retrospect rather than as a present reality, as God said to Moses : " Thou shalt see me after I have passed by." The heart burns with an unwonted glow while the person himself hardly knows why he is so moved until the secret declares itself in some later experience.

" Hearts that are fainting  
Grow full to o'erflowing  
And they that behold it  
Marvel and know not  
That God has been raining  
Far off at their fountains."

In all ages and among almost all peoples this vital, acute and intense type of religious experience has appeared in higher or lower degrees. It is religion in its first intention, and the continual recurrence of it has kept religion alive and progressive through all the fluctuations and the disasters of human history. So important and so wonderful has this mystical experience—this first hand consciousness of God—seemed in different periods of history that religious experts have sometimes endeavoured to indicate definite

methods of attaining it. They have given directions by which faithful and obedient souls might pass from the lower levels of religious life and power to the higher levels, or even to the highest level of union and absorption in God. These expert directions constitute the so-called "mystic way" with its upward steps or rounds, by which the soul may mount from knowledge about God to knowledge of intimate acquaintance with Him. From the period of St. Augustine in the fourth century an immense amount of attention was given to this phase of religion by the great spiritual leaders of Christian life and thought. There was an almost unbroken line of mystical prophets in real apostolic succession. "Dionysius," John Scotus Erigena, Richard of St. Victor, Hugh of St. Victor, Bernard of Clairvaux, Amaury of Bene, St. Thomas Aquinas, Meister Eckhart and many others contributed out of the mighty stream of their personal experience to the clearer knowledge of God and of the mystic way. In the fourteenth century mysticism had come to be recognised as an indispensable feature of living Christianity. Dominicans and Franciscans agreed upon this. The followers of St. Thomas and the followers of Duns Scotus, who were opposed upon a multitude of points, were united in the view that the soul of man could and should come into a personal experience of God. The real essentials of the faith were felt to be not the conclusions of Councils,

nor the decisions of the Pope, nor the secular policy of the Vatican, but the immediate experiences of God which came to the individual souls who constituted the true, invisible Church of the living God.

Out of the vague longings and strivings of the people who heard the great mystic teachers and read their books and sermons there gradually emerged a somewhat concrete and definite mystical "movement" with a well-defined aim and purpose to reform the Church. All through the latter part of the thirteenth century there had been forming small groups of mystically-minded men and women. They bore a variety of names, for example: Beghards, Beguines, Brothers of the Free Spirit, and Flagellants, and they exhibited varying degrees of sanity and spiritual service. But they in any case suggested to the lay people of the period the value of group-life and the possibility of propagating mystical religion through concentrated effort in intensified societies. The powerful popular preaching of Eckhart (1260-1327) one of the greatest interpreters of mysticism that ever lived, was another influence in the same direction. The grave catastrophes and disasters of the period, the Black Death, the civil war over the imperial succession, "the Babylonish Captivity" of the Church, tended to put sensitively organised persons into unstable equilibrium and to make them ready to respond in an unusual



way to the suggestions of forceful leaders. The rapid spread of flagellation through the cities and towns of Europe, caught up like a contagion, reveals the psychological condition which prevailed in the middle-period of the century. In this atmosphere the societies of the "Friends of God" were born along the Rhine Valley from the Swiss overland to the sea. They were loosely organised groups of persons gathered about some strong leader who directed the spiritual culture and development of the little band. The leaders were of both sexes, and there were "sisterhood groups" as well as "brotherhood groups." Margaret and Christina Ebner, of Bavaria, were two of the most remarkable leaders of this intense spiritual revival, and it would seem that "prophetesses" were fully as influential as "prophets." The ideals of the scattered groups can be discovered now only through the fragmentary correspondence which has survived, and through a peculiar form of literature which the leaders of the little societies created. The books are semifictitious, the situations being partly real and partly imagined and being always freely handled, often with considerable genius, so as to set forth and illustrate the ideals and aspirations of the "Friends of God." It is plainly a *layman's* movement. These "Friends of God" had not "broken" with the Church, but they had lost hope and expectation that any great spiritual results were likely to come



to the world through the hierarchy or through its consecrated channels of grace. They did not give up using the existing "channels" but they constantly speak of them as less important than the direct way to God which they have discovered in their own souls, and occasionally they approach the Protestant attitude and temper of mind. The recurrent note in their letters and writings is the testimony which they bear to the spiritual service that can be rendered by lay persons when once they have found God, and have become organs of His Spirit. Without intending to dispense with the historical system, they practically treated it as a kind of loop-line which could be left on one side since the desired goal could be attained by a shorter cut across. The widely known, but much misunderstood, treatise, entitled *The Book of the Master*, one of the most successful of their writings, was written to expound the potential spiritual service which can be rendered to the Church by the enlightened *layman*. The "Master" was long supposed to be John Tauler, and this document was used as a basis for the biography of this great Strasbourg preacher. It is almost certainly a piece of imaginative literature and gives nobody's actual biography, but it does tell in powerful fashion what might be done by an unordained Christian man who brings his soul into parallelism with divine currents, and lets the life of God go out through him. "The

Holy Spirit," this layman declares to the Master of Scripture, "has the same power to-day as ever." "Men can still hear in their own souls what they are to speak." There is a "lower school" of external, or letter knowledge, and a "higher school," or "upper school," in which men are directly taught by the Holy Spirit.

A good illustration of the difference between the two methods is given in *The Book of the Two Men*, another example of *tendency-writing* from some Friend of God :

"If two men gave thee a description of the City of Rome, one by mere hearsay, and the other by experience after he had been there, thou wouldst give thy attention mainly to the second. So also, if a man who has been touched inwardly by divine grace hears the preaching of a doctor who still loves himself, he feels that the preaching of such a doctor does not come from pure and unadulterated love of God. The soul that is filled with divine love is not touched by such a sermon. Such a preacher is speaking only by hearsay of the heavenly Rome, and of the roads which lead to it. He knows only what he has learned from Scripture. But if the same man hears the preaching of a master who knows both from Scripture and through his own spiritual experience, a master who has renounced all self-love and self-advantage, who knows the heavenly Rome, not only by hearsay, but because he has travelled the road to it, and

because he has seen the form of its building, he rejoices to hear his message, because it proceeds from the Divine Love itself."

One of the most impressive of all the interpretations of religion which the "Friends of God" have left us, is that given in the *Book of the Nine Rocks*. It insists in vivid style that God is still *a living God*, and can now as of old send the fresh waters of divine grace through men. "That man is not a Christian," the writer declares, "who does not believe that the divine power remains the same throughout the centuries." The main channels are, however, not those to which men have been accustomed to turn. "Popes are no longer sainted; they become ambitious for worldly goods," this reforming spirit announces, and "God has now conferred His grace on *other men*, whom He has endowed with spiritual gifts." "They are—these *other men*—few in number," he adds, "but if they wholly disappeared from the world, Christianity would utterly come to an end." In his mind the "Friends of God," thus form "the saving remnant." If "a Friend of God," raised to power through direct experience of God, were put at the head of Christianity, the *Book of the Nine Rocks* says, he would forthwith "transform it because he would have the counsel of the Holy Spirit to guide Him." Every city in the world, too, would be changed, if a "Friend of God" had the management of affairs, for he would

direct the city into God's way. How near this fourteenth century layman came to a religion of the Spirit can perhaps be seen in a striking passage which insists that God can save men in many ways besides the way tradition has sanctioned as unique. He says :

“ If a Jew or Mohammedan fears God from the depth of his heart, and leads a good and simple life ; if he does not know any better religion than the one in which he was born ; if he is ready to obey God in case He reveals to him a better faith than his own, why should not such a man be dearer to God than wicked and impious ‘ Christians ’ who though having received baptism, wilfully disobey the commands of God ? When God finds a good Jew or Mohammedan of pure life He feels a thrill of love and infinite pity for him, no matter in what part of the earth he lives, and *God will find some way of saving him unknown to us !* ” “ If baptism cannot be conferred upon him, though he has a desire for it, *God can baptize him in the holy desire of his will*, and there are in the eternal world many good pagans who have been received in this way.”

John Tauler, Jan Ruysbroeck, and the unknown author of a little book, called *Theologia Germanica*, are the profoundest interpreters of the spiritual religion which “ the Friends of God ” endeavoured to express and practise. These three writers lay excessive emphasis on the way of abstraction and negation. They had inherited from their



literary progenitors a form of thought which conceived of God as the "Hidden Dark" *i.e.* as an indeterminate Absolute, devoid of all concrete attributes, an Infinite withdrawn from all finites, a Reality apart from and above all particulars. No revelation could reveal Him, no description could express His being, no word about Him could be a true account of His nature. This strain, which holds an immense place in most mystical literature, does not fit our present way of conceiving God, and it makes the books and sermons of these earlier prophets of the spiritual life, with their insistent stress upon asceticism and withdrawal, somewhat of a burden to the modern reader.

There is, however, another strain in these great books which speaks straight to the sincere modern heart. These men are done with the hollow performances of "religion" and have found a direct way to the living God and to life itself. They were trying, as valiantly as they could, to inaugurate a new epoch, to build a new kind of Church, resting for its power not on Dogma, or orders, or sacraments, or authority of ordination, but on the Life and Love of God revealed in and through their human lives. They formed a true "remnant" in the difficult world of their age, and they exerted one of the supreme influences upon the inner life of the Reformation two centuries later, for which they had done much to prepare the way.



## X

### THE COMMON MAN'S ATTEMPT AT REFORMATION

PARALLEL with the main current of the Protestant Reformation there ran from the very beginning another powerful current which has always received far less consideration from historians than it deserves. Some have supposed it to be an abortive, if not monstrous, undertaking. Others have considered it one more among the many "lost causes" of which history is more or less silent. Neither one of these positions is, however, quite tenable. It was, like "Bunker Hill" in the American Revolution, "a battle lost, but a cause won," since nearly everything which these minor reformers aimed at has since been achieved or is on the way to achievement.

The leaders of this parallel movement were ruthlessly martyred, their followers were exterminated, their books and tracts were suppressed, their aims were slanderously misinterpreted, their brave efforts were as rapidly as possible overwhelmed with oblivion, but, strangely enough, their ideas have triumphed. Their truths—though they them-

selves are dead—are marching on, like John Brown's spirit. Their vision of what Christianity should be is much closer to the heart of our own religion to-day in England and America, than is either the theology of Luther or the dogmatic system of Calvin. There is no occasion to belittle the service of the great reformers, the reformers of folio size, like Luther, Calvin and Zwingli. They did a monumental piece of work; they changed the course of history decidedly for the better, and they have been given, and rightly so, their place with the immortals. There is, nevertheless, much lumber, sheer dead wood, in their semi-mediæval systems. They carried on many aspects of pre-reformation Christianity which might profitably have been sloughed off, and they loaded human minds and hearts with some tragic burdens which they might well have been spared; and they failed to feel or to sympathise with the liberating social aspirations which the minor reformers felt. It is no doubt easier to see these facts to-day than it was to see them four hundred years ago, and we ought not to expect at the beginning of a period the critical insight that comes through the cumulative experience of the years.

These neglected reformers—of the quarto or octavo size, perhaps—did see on the spot then, that much of the wood in the new systems was already dead, that many of the tragic burdens which the reformers were loading on human

shoulders were too heavy to be borne and were, in any case, unnecessary. They wanted a "root and branch" reformation, a thorough-going reformation, a radical purification and re-organisation. Though they belonged to the scholarly class and came, almost without exception, from the universities, they were in deep sympathy with the people. They thought and spoke for toilers and peasants. They had entered into the meaning of the social struggle, and had come under the burden of human suffering; they intensely felt the social wrongs of the world, and they came forth as the champions of the reformation which the common man needed and demanded. They failed in their day to carry through their programme, but it was in the main a noble aspiration, much of it was wisely conceived, historical experience has confirmed many of the aims embodied in it, and it deserves patient and impartial, if not sympathetic, study. One of the most interesting historical questions is that concerned with the spiritual pedigree of the movement, or more properly of the movements, for it was not ever as we shall see, well unified into any single system. There must obviously have been *some* pre-reformation preparation for it, since it burst forth almost simultaneously at many widely sundered places, in many lands, and it accumulated at once an immense popular volume and momentum. Wherever, it appeared it took on, with all its particular

variations, striking similarities at least in its central purpose and in its fundamental principles. The leaders plainly had a large stock of ideas and ideals in common. There must have been some back-ground explanation. Unfortunately it is not possible yet to produce definite documentary evidence to prove beyond question that these new groups which formed at the beginning of the Reformation were the direct product of earlier groups of mystics, Waldenses, Wyclifites, Hussites, "Brothers of the Common Life," or "Spiritual Franciscans."\* And yet it is an unmistakable fact that there did exist in unbroken succession, especially through the Rhine valley and in Switzerland, hidden groups of "heretics" and mystics. The puritan-minded Waldenses were never suppressed on the continent, as the Lollards never were in England. The writings of the mystics of the fourteenth, and especially the writings of the great "Brother of the Common Life," Thomas à Kempis of the fifteenth century, were widely circulated and devotedly read. These books, as we know exercised a profound influence on Luther, and there is much to indicate that they exerted a still more profound influence upon the popular leaders with whom we are now concerned. The essential reason for thinking so is that the

\* Ludwig Keller was convinced that his researches established this point, but other scholars, including Troeltsch, do not endorse his claim. See especially Keller's *Ein Apostel der Wiertäufer*.



body of ideas in the new movement are uniformly so harmonious and consonant with the teaching and aspirations of these mystics and with the heretical groups which had already suggested the lines of reformation that were needed to restore real Christianity.

Two events woke the quiet, long-suffering successors of the mystics and heretical groups from mere dumb hope to eager, vivid expectation—the powerful teaching of the humanists and the dynamic message of Luther. It is impossible to miss or ignore the direct influence of the humanists upon the leaders of this common-man's reformation. It is most apparent in the new social and ethical emphasis. They one and all show a revolt from the old theology. It has lost both its interest and its reality for them. Something else more real and more appealing has come into the foreground of their consciousness. They have drawn much closer to the Jesus of the Gospels than had anybody else since St. Francis. They are more attracted to Him and to His wonderful words than to the elaborate metaphysical accounts of His being and nature. They turn eagerly to the positive teachings of this great Master of life as they find them revealed in the New Testament, which the humanists had helped them discover. They learned, too, from these same humanists how vastly different the Church of their time was from the Church in its pristine apostolic purity and power.



Then came Luther's electrifying message of faith and freedom, shaking them entirely awake. They almost all refer to his quick and powerful word. They rose at once to meet it. They thought he was to lead them into a new epoch and be their leader in the work of building a new Church. "The Liberty of a Christian Man" and the "Babylonian Captivity of the Church" as they read them in 1520, seemed like a new revelation from God. They felt that the hour had struck and that the new heaven and the new earth were within hail.

Two pretty clearly marked tendencies appear in this general effort of the period to secure the type of reformation which the common man was striving for, though it must be recognised that the entire undertaking always remained throughout somewhat fluid, uncompact and unorganised. The two typical tendencies were: (1) in the direction of what is historically denominated "Anabaptism," and (2) a serious aim to work out a truly spiritual Christianity, winnowed of the accumulations of paganism, superstition, theology, and secularism. We may, therefore, loosely divide the leaders of the popular movement into "Anabaptists" and "Spiritual Reformers," though the division is not a sharp one and some leaders do not easily come under either label, while others seem to come under both labels. The Anabaptists numerically bulk much larger than the second group,

though in historical influence the former are not more important than the latter.\*

The first group of Anabaptists to differentiate, and to formulate and express its principles was the Swiss group, in and about Zurich and St. Gall. The leaders were young scholars and priests whose hearts, "under the cross," had been made one with the common people. They were genuine shepherds of the flock. The most important men who led this movement were Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, William Roublin, Simon Stumpff, and Ludwig Hetzer. They had all been powerfully affected by their reading and study of the Bible, now for the first time truly a book of the people. They began to preach a fresh message drawn from the prophets and the gospel to their flocks. The popular response was immediate, and they found themselves, without intending it, the champions of a new cause. As Zwingli moved forward to secure a reformation of the Swiss Churches, these men gladly joined and were content to follow his leading. They soon discovered, however, that he was moving toward a reformation which was far too restrained and limited to suit their conception of what the times demanded. They engaged in public discussions with him and found that he was voicing the reforming aims of the nobles and upper classes but was unrespon-

\* In this chapter I shall consider the "Anabaptists," and the next chapter will be devoted to the "Spiritual Reformers."

sive to the deep needs of the masses whom they represented. Gradually they felt compelled to deviate from the course which Zwingli was steering and to proclaim a more radical programme. They came across the writings of the "new prophets" of the people, Thomas Münzer and Carlstadt, and they deeply sympathised with the aspirations for a more inward religion which these men voiced, but they thoroughly disapproved of Münzer's support of popular insurrection and his passionate appeal to the oppressed to use the sword. They declined to employ the world's way to success and trusted wholly to the inherent power of ideals and to the invisible help of God. They felt from the first that they were to be a "remnant" of the true Church. What they demanded as the most urgent need of the times was the complete reformation of the Church to make it fit the New Testament. They insisted first of all that the Church of Christ must be "a congregation of believers." Only those, they claimed, who have hearts of faith, spiritual insight, obedient wills and real religious experience can compose a Christian Church. A mixed multitude of good and bad, of saints and sinners, cannot make a true Church. The historical compromise with the world, the scaling of the Christian standards, down to the level of the nominal, secular membership seemed to them to be the greatest source of the "apostacy" of the

Church. They now proposed to wipe the slate clean, to make a new start and to form a Church consisting only of Christians, only of the faithful. It seemed to them that the custom of baptizing infants, who from the nature of the case could not exercise faith, was one fertile cause of the degeneracy. It stood in their eyes as the mark of apostacy from Apostolic Christianity, somewhat as circumcision stood out, for St. Paul in the Galatian controversy, as the peculiar mark of Judaistic legalism. If the Church were henceforth to be pure and Christian, then it must have no rites and practices which did not attach directly to personal faith, and it must have no members who had not positively experienced in their own souls a living faith. They had little primary interest in sacraments at best, since their main concern was for a strongly ethical and social Christianity, but they believed that the primitive Christians practised baptism as an outward sign of an inward experience and as a testimony of fellowship in a visible Church. They proposed therefore to restore baptism to this primitive, apostolic function. In 1525 Grebel baptized Blaurock, a devoted Christian man and one of the band of preachers who had accepted the radical attitude.

Blaurock thereupon, "in deep fear of God," baptized many others and a community of "brothers," as they liked to call themselves, began to grow and to differentiate from the



main Zwinglian reformation. These dissenters were given the nickname of "Anabaptists," which means rebaptizers, and the name stuck to them and widened out to include almost all types of persons who dissented from the Roman and Reformed churches. It was the opprobrious label for the entire effort of the common man for a reformation. The Swiss dissenters themselves refused to accept the name or to admit its implication. They declared that they were not "rebaptizers." The baptism which they had received as infants, they claimed, was no baptism at all, since baptism cannot take place without positive personal faith on the part of the recipient. Adult baptism taken in faith as a sign of fellowship in the pure Church of Christ was, in their view, the one and only baptism—not a "second baptism."

As their aims grew defined, the Anabaptists endeavoured: (1) To construct a Church entirely on the model of the New Testament, in every particular a copy of the apostolic pattern. (2) This was to be a visible Church, composed only of believers, a community of saints, winnowed and separated from the unbelieving and unspiritual. (3) This state of purity in the Church was to be preserved by a rigorous use of discipline. Those who fall below the Christian standard and become corrupt or contaminated by the world, or who compromise with the world,



must be excluded by ban from membership in the Church, *i.e.*, there must be a continuous use of the winnowing fan. (4) The Church must be completely severed from all entangling alliance with the State. The Church and State have officially nothing in common. Membership in the former is a free act. There must be no kind of compulsion in spiritual matters. Through faith and experience the Church lives and grows and enlarges its fellowship. It influences the character of those who form the State but its authority is indirect, not direct. In the sphere of religion the State has no authority ; conscience in its relation with God is to be absolutely free and untrammelled. (5) All Christians have the same fundamental rights as the clergy have. There are no classes, no orders, no fixed distinctions. The only differences are differences of gift and function. (6) The movement tended, though more or less unconsciously, to treat the Gospel as "a new law," to be literally followed and obeyed, very much as was done in the earlier groups of Waldenses and Lollards. Under this influence most branches of the Anabaptists refused to take oaths, set themselves absolutely against war, and denied that a Christian is allowed under any circumstances to take human life, even in self-defence. With this rigorous literalism they also joined a moral strictness of life more extreme than that which marked any

other section of the Reformation, even that of the Calvinistic Churches. (7) They not only proclaimed freedom of conscience, they bore a powerful testimony to the august authority of conscience. They arrived at the conviction that conscience is an inner sanctuary or shechinah of God Himself, and here as nowhere else they believed the voice of the living God is heard. With this exalted sense of an inner connection with the divine, they suffered and died for what seemed to them eternal truth and everlasting righteousness, and in doing so they gave a new note of emphasis to the moral worth of conscience.

Two very powerful leaders, of German origin and education, soon threw in their lot with the Swiss dissenters and stood out at once as the prophets of the new movement, Balthazar Hübmaier, born near Augsburg in 1480, and Hans Denck, a Bavarian, born about 1495. Hübmaier was a doctor of theology, one of the best scholars of his time, a humanist, a mystic, a powerful preacher, a high-minded, pure-hearted, brave man, and finally, in 1528, a martyr. His watchword used on the title-page of his little books, was "Truth is immortal," and he maintained, even in the face of death, that *truth ultimately wins* in any contest. He accepted in full measure Luther's claim that faith—the soul's attitude of trust and confidence in God—is the fundamental basis of

Christianity. Only he went farther with the principle than Luther did and carried it out more consistently. Nothing in the sphere of religion can be accomplished, he held, without insight, faith, obedience, effort, conformity of heart and will with God. Religion must be from first to last a spiritual affair. Rites, ceremonies, magical or sacerdotal performances cannot alter the ethical and inherent facts of life. "God," he declared in his *Apology*, "will have none of our Baal-cries." With this central position fixed, Hübmaier laboured valiantly to secure a reformation of the Church consonant with the spiritual character of apostolic Christianity. "I believe," he wrote, "and confess a holy catholic Church, which is a communion of saints, a brotherhood of devout and believing men."\* Very large numbers were convinced by Hübmaier's preaching and when his lips were sealed by the faggots in Vienna he had already carried his interpretation of religion into many lives in Swiss and Austrian towns.†

Denck belongs very definitely among "the spiritual reformers," but he was for a time identified with the Anabaptists and he undoubtedly exerted a very strong influence upon the movement in its early stage, though as his insight deepened and his views matured his interpretation of Christianity took a

\* Hübmaier's *Twelve Articles of Faith*.

† It is estimated that 6,000 persons became Anabaptists in and around Nikolsburg where Hübmaier preached.

broader outlook and a more universal aspect than most Anabaptists were ready for. For nearly a year—September, 1525 to October, 1526—Denck was in Augsburg endeavouring to organise and direct the popular movement toward reform, striving to check fanatical tendencies, opposing literalists and extremists and putting forth strenuous efforts to deepen and spiritualise the throngs of enthusiastic *seekers*.

Before the Anabaptist leaders had any opportunity to clarify their aims or to formulate their principles, the world took fright at the potential dangers of the movement and began suppressing the prominent exponents of it and endeavouring to obliterate it utterly. The uprising of the German peasants in 1525, in the hope of securing for themselves a measure of economic and social justice, gave the ruling class and the nobles a vivid sense of what might happen if these submerged people awakened, *found themselves* and became an organised and directed force.\* Luther had thrown all the power of his pen, voice and personality against the cause of the peasants. He wrote: "Whoever can should knock down, strangle and stab insurgents, privately or publicly, and think nothing so venomous, pernicious and devilish as an insurgent." He declared that those who died fighting against the peasants were "true

\* The peasant leaders did not of course share the non-resistant views of the Anabaptists.



martyrs before God," and that those who perish on the peasant side are "everlasting hell-brands."\* The long-suffering peasants, driven to the limit of endurance by their intolerable condition and inspired by the hope which the dawning reformation gave them, made their assault against the immovable wall of German authority and failed. Münzer, the spiritual champion of their aspirations, went to death with them.

The early Anabaptist leaders, most of whom owed much to the dynamic, if not wisely directed, zeal of Münzer, disapproved of the appeal to force and set themselves against insurrection. The Zurich society of "brothers" wrote to Münzer in September, 1524, urging him not to resort to violence. For them the gospel was a gospel of peace and love. They say: "The Gospel and its followers should not be guarded by the sword, neither shall they so guard themselves, as, by what we hear from the Brethren, ye assume and pretend to be right. Truly believing Christians are sheep in the midst of wolves, sheep ready for the slaughter; they must be baptized in fear and in need, in tribulation and death, that they may be tried to the last, and enter *the fatherhood of eternal peace*, not with carnal but with spiritual weapons. They use neither the sword nor war."† In spite

\* Luther's Tract, *Wider die Mörderischen und Räuberischen Rotten der Bauern*.

† Letter written by Grebel to Münzer.



of this gentle attitude, which beyond question characterised the main current of the popular reformation, all existing authorities both of Church and State, were seized with intense antipathy toward these spiritual strivings of the common man, rose in might and stamped them out in blood and fire. All the early leaders were either killed outright or so severely treated that death overtook them prematurely. The members of the group of "brothers" were dealt with as pests and outcasts, harried, imprisoned, banished, forced to live like beasts in dens and caves of the earth. It is impossible to tell what would have been the social and spiritual effect of this popular movement—which apparently, judging from its enthusiastic beginnings, would have swept in the common people of all countries—if it had been allowed to develop and realise its aims.\* Its first leaders were honest, sincere, unselfish men. They had no hostile intent. They sought no personal power or aggrandisement. They had no spirit of hate. They were fired with no class animus. They wanted to be a remnant of the true Church and to restore Christianity to its original place of power as a way of life and love. One of Denck's disciples, Hans Langenmantel,

\* Even in the face of the terrific persecution that came down upon it as soon as it began, there were many thousands of Anabaptists in Middle-Europe, and it has been estimated that 30,000 were put to death in Holland alone, though the figures are probably too large.

said: "The highest command of God is love: 'Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbour as thyself.'" They denied that it is right to try to gain spiritual ends by violence and sword. They trusted everything to the immortal power of truth, to the transforming force of ideas. They meant to inaugurate a Church which would expand and finally become the Kingdom of God on earth. They found a Golgotha instead.

The fury of the persecution, the appalling method of answering their dumb aspirations, produced at once a new type of leader and drove many of the Anabaptists toward fanaticism. Melchior Hoffman of Strasbourg and his disciples are a different type from those whom I have so far considered. Always inclined to literalism, the movement now focussed upon a fervid expectation of the fulfilment of millennial hopes. Hoffman became the prophet of an intense chiliasm and even proclaimed that the sword might be used to hasten the expected Kingdom of God. His Dutch disciples, Jan Matthys and Jan Brockelson, pushed the fanaticism of the radical wing to its wildest limit and gave to the world by the spectacle of the Munster kingdom a reason for the feeling of horror towards Anabaptism and an excuse, after the fact, for its method of thorough extermination.\*

\* Hans Hut, a disciple of Münzer, also preached apocalyptic hopes, though, unlike Hoffman, he remained non-resistant.

A remnant of the original stock survived the double tragedy of persecution and fanaticism. The followers of Jacob Huter, a Tyrolese Anabaptist, who worked out a very interesting type of communistic society, succeeded in escaping from the annihilating persecutions of the Tyrol and migrated into Moravia. Eventually Huter was martyred. His last despairing cry is touching: "We know that it is not allowable to forbid the earth to us for the earth is the Heavenly Father's." Huter's communities were driven from place to place and reduced in numbers, but they were never wholly eradicated or suppressed. The Mennonites form another group of survivors. They owe their name and many of their characteristics to Menno Simon, born in West Friesland about 1496. He set himself to winnowing out the follies and fanaticisms of the Dutch Anabaptists and he succeeded in organising a strong branch of the movement which has survived to the present time. He carried a puritan spirit into his group of followers, a determination to take the commands of Christ literally and a tendency to form "a peculiar people," distinguished by dress, manners, separation from public affairs, and absence of ordained or salaried ministry. Sporadic individuals and even groups of Anabaptists escaped the violent protestant and catholic persecutions in most of the Continental countries and a large number,

in one way or another, got into England. They merged with the Lollards and in some cases managed to escape the fires of Smithfield. They helped to form the numerous groups of heretics and dissenters which swarmed during the freer time of the English Commonwealth. They formed also the early nucleus of the famous Baptist Societies out of which the Baptists sprang.

## XI.

### THE EXPERIMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL REFORMERS.

THE other fundamental tendency, which in the former chapter I have called the aim at a "spiritual reformation," was even more viscous, or fluid, than was the Anabaptist movement, less compact and unified. One reason for the lack of organisation and solidification is to be found in the strong mystical aspect of this reforming movement. Its leaders were hostile to systems. They were in revolt against dogmas and they were equally opposed to the tyranny of authoritative, state-controlled ecclesiastical institutions. They wanted to escape alike from a Hellenised and a Romanised Christianity. They saw no way to solve the problem without a complete shift of emphasis from the outward to the inward. The visible Church had tightened itself around the human spirit until no free area or independent sphere of activity seemed left for man's soul in its own right. These minor prophets of the Reformation were primarily prophets of the soul, champions of the free spirit. They had no architectonic genius. They felt no interest in rearing either structures of logic or insti-



tutional structures. Like Copernicus, they proposed a new centre, and their new centre was man's soul. They were always thinking and writing about the Church, but it was from first to last an invisible Church about which they were concerned, not the visible and empirical one. It is in this point that they differ most from the Anabaptists with whom they had close sympathy and often warm fellowship. The Anabaptists were eager to create a new visible Church and they took the written word of Scripture as their charter for it. The "spiritual reformers" accepted neither of these attitudes. They found the ultimate basis of religion in the Word of God, the Light of God, revealed in the interior life of man, and they thought of the Church as a spiritual organism of illuminated and inwardly guided persons. They were deeply read in the books of the German and Flemish mystics — Eckhart, Tauler, Ruysbroeck, *Theologia Germanica*, the writings of "the Friends of God" and *The Imitation of Christ*, but they were almost as much influenced by the Humanists, especially by Erasmus. They shared his faith in human freedom, his strong emphasis on the ethical aspect of the true Christian life, his dislike of theological dogma and his appreciation of the pure and simple "gospel." They were mystics but they were distinctly a new type of mystic. Through their dislike for theology and metaphysics they allowed the

speculative element, which is so large a feature of fourteenth century mysticism, to fall away and they consequently made the positive, affirmative way of relationship with God much more prominent than the *via negativa* of the earlier mystics. In short, they were more interested in direct experience than they were in logic.

So far as one can locate any "originator" of the movement—which after all stands out very much like Melchizedek, without historical "father or mother"—Thomas Münzer was the first person in the Reformation period to make the living Voice or Word of God in the soul the basis of religion. The interior Teacher seemed to him the source of truth and the guide of life. He was, unfortunately, a loosely organised individual, lacking in balance and capable of being stirred to fanaticism. But he planted his idea in the heart of Ludwig Hetzer, translator of the Hebrew prophets, and Hans Denck, the humanist school-master of St. Sebald School in Nuremberg, and it came to resurrection, life and power in sounder and saner men. Denck, though he is often reckoned an Anabaptist, and though for a period he endeavoured to shape the development of the Anabaptists in the direction of his own ideals, belongs more distinctly in this second group. Johann Bänderlin, born in Linz, a town of Upper Austria about 1495, Christian Entfelder who first appears as pastor of a flock in

Moravia in 1527, and Sebastian Franck, born at Donauwörth in Schwabia in 1499, are other early exponents of the spiritual ideals. Caspar Schwenckfeld, born at Liegnitz in Lower Silesia in 1489, was more distinctly interested than these other leaders were in the formation of a visible society—those of “the middle way,” as he called his “remnant”—and he created a brotherhood that has survived to the present time, but his ideas and ideals were of the general type which I am calling the aim at a “spiritual reform.” Sebastian Castellio, a French humanist and opponent of Calvin, born near Geneva in 1515, and Dirck Coornhert, a prominent Dutch scholar, born in Amsterdam in 1522, are two of the noblest interpreters of these spiritual ideals and aspirations.

They were all strongly individualistic and they felt too little the importance of the help of a visible community. They had a naïve, uncritical and unquestioning faith in inner divine guidance and personal revelation. “The Kingdom of God,” Denck says, “is in you and he who searches for it outside himself will never find it, for apart from God no one can either seek or find God, but he who seeks God already in truth has Him”; and again: “He who does not know God from God Himself does not ever know Him.”\*

Franck is a still more confident apostle

\* From Denck's two tracts, *Was geredet sey*, etc. and *Vom Gesetz Gottes*.

of the inner way. Many, he says, know and teach only what they have picked up and gathered in "without having experienced it in the deeps of themselves." Hearing people read and talk about God is "all a dead thing." The real Christian "must go inside and have the experience for himself."\*

But in spite of the fact that they seem so individualistic and concerned with personal experience in their own souls, they are emphatically *social* in their sympathies. Like the Anabaptists they are interested in the common man. They all alike make *love*, actual human love, the mark of fellowship with Christ. They show a fresh interest in man for his own sake. They all, with the exception of Schwenckfeld, deny the depravity of man and they refuse utterly to accept the dogma of "unfree will." They realise that human life is a frail and tragic affair, but it is, nevertheless, big with spiritual possibilities, and the most splendid fruit of life is love. "TO HATE EVERYTHING THAT HINDERS LOVE," is Denck's ideal of life.† Castellio declares that Christ's way always means love. "You [meaning Calvin] may return to Moses if you will, but for us others Christ has come."‡ Love, he constantly insists, is the supreme badge of any true Christianity, the traits of the beatitudes

\* Franck's *Paradoxa*, Vorrede, sec. 13. and *passim*.

† *Vom Gesetz Gottes*, p. 12.

‡ Castellio's *Contra Libellum Calvini*.



in a person's life are surer evidence that he belongs to Christ's family than is the fact that he holds orthodox opinions on obscure questions of belief. "To burn a man," he cried out, "is not to prove a truth, it is to burn a man!" This emphasis upon *love* was with them not a literary device. They talked and wrote much about it because it was the central feature of the gospel which they had re-discovered. They practised love in the hard and difficult world of their time. They would not even hope for divine judgment upon their enemies and opposers, because they would not attribute to God traits of character which they counted unethical and unspiritual in themselves..

■ Franck has expressed as well as any of the group, the way they felt about the invisible Church: "The true Church is not a separate mass of people, not a particular sect to be pointed out with the finger, not confined to one time or place; it is rather a spiritual and invisible body of all the members of Christ, born of God, of one mind, spirit and faith, but not gathered in any one external city or place. It is a Fellowship, seen with the spiritual eye and by the inner man. It is the assembly and communion of all truly God-fearing, good-hearted, new-born persons in all the world, bound together by the Holy Spirit in the peace of God and the bonds of love—a Communion outside of which there is no salvation, no Christ, no God, no compre-



hension of Scripture, no Holy Spirit and no Gospel. I belong to this Fellowship. I believe in the Communion of Saints, and I am in this Church, let me be where I may, and therefore I no longer look for Christ in lo heres or lo theres.”\* This Church, which the Spirit is building through the ages and in all lands, is, once more, like the experience of an individual Christian, entirely an inward affair. “Love is the one mark and badge of fellowship in it.”† No outward forms of any sort seem to him necessary for membership in this true Church. External gifts and offices make no Christian, and just as little does the standing of the person, or locality, or time, or dress, or food, or anything external. “The Kingdom of God is neither prince nor peasant, food nor drink, hat nor coat, here or there, yesterday nor to-morrow, baptism nor circumcision, nor anything whatever that is external, but peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, unalloyed love out of a pure heart and good conscience, and an unfeigned faith.”‡

*The Kingdom of God*, as they hold, is a *Kingdom of experience*, and they want every feature and detail of the religious life to spring out of experience and to assist its enlargement. “As often,” Schwenckfeld writes, “as a new warrior comes to the

\* *Paradoxa*, Vorrede, Sec. 8.

† *Ibid.* Sec. 9.

‡ *Ibid.* Sec. 45.

heavenly army, as often as a poor sinner repents, the body of Christ becomes larger, the King more splendid, His kingdom stronger, His might more perfect.”\*

All these men have but the slenderest interest in sacraments. Sacraments have become for them what circumcision was for St. Paul when he wrote: “neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.” Schwenckfeld treats this matter more profoundly than any of the others. He meditated long and deeply upon the question, studying the New Testament both broadly and minutely, while at the same time he gave much thought to the fundamental nature of the religious life. He took Judas as his test case. He argued that if baptism and the supper were efficacious in themselves then Judas, who received the supper from the Lord Himself, would have been saved by it. If the bread and wine were changed into actual body and blood of Christ then he must have eaten of Christ and partaken of His divine Nature, but no corresponding change of spirit appears in him. He came out from the supper and immediately revealed an evil spirit. Schwenckfeld finds the key to Christ’s teaching on spiritual life in the Johannine account of eating Christ’s flesh and drinking His blood. This assimilation of Christ is for him not a figure, not a symbol, but a central fact. The risen

\* Schwenckfeld’s *Schriften*, ii. p. 290.

and glorified Christ, the incorruptible life-giving substance of the God-Man, is the essential, necessary source of spiritual life for men. He must become the actual food of the soul. Not on rare occasions, but continually, the true nature of Christ must be received and assimilated into the inner substance of our human spirits. No symbol can be a substitute for that actual experience. "God must himself, apart from all external means, through Christ touch the soul, speak in it, work in it, if we are to experience salvation."\* The Church which these "reformers" were endeavouring to create was thought of as a communion or fellowship of persons who were drawn together and united by their intimate spiritual relation with the living Christ. It was a Church after the Spirit and not an imperial institution, possessed of magical authority, employing mysterious sacraments or holding a final deposit of infallible doctrine. It was to be an organism rather than an organisation. "No outward unity, or uniformity," Schwenckfeld wrote, "either in doctrine or ceremonies, or rules or sacraments, can make a Christian Church ; but inner unity of Spirit, of heart, soul and conscience in Christ, and in the knowledge of Him, a unity in love and faith, does make a Church of Christ."†

\* Schwenckfeld's *Schriften*, i. p. 768b.

† *Schriften* i, p. 785.

Jacob Boehme, born in Silesia in 1575, more completely than any other single continental interpreter, gave a many-sided expression to the faith and aspiration of these spiritual leaders.\* He is the culmination of the movement. There are many other strands of influence in Boehme, especially the theosophical and alchemic ideas derived from Agrippa of Nettesheim, Paracelsus and Weigel. This latter stock of inheritance proved a heavy weight to this great tragic, but surely divinely inspired, mystic. The barbarous terminology, the baffling symbolisms, and the literary limitations of this Silesian prophet were always a tremendous handicap, but in spite of all the obstacles, difficulties and hindrances a real heavenly vision and a living message break through and get revealed in Boehme's books. His most important permanent contribution to Christianity is to be found in his interpretation of what he calls *the process of salvation as a way of life*. Here he is unmistakably "a spiritual reformer." He will not put up with schemes or notions. He sets himself as strongly against the substitution of doctrines of salvation for an experienced process of salvation as Luther did against the substitution of works for faith. "Thou thyself," he says, "must go through Christ's whole journey, and enter wholly into His process."†

\* The influence of Schwenckfeld is most marked in Boehme.

† True Repentance.



He opposes the protestant tendency to make the Bible the basis of reformed religion—he calls that another form of “Babel-building,” which does not reach all the way to God. The written letter-word is no true substitute for the living Word of God in a man’s soul. Theological “opinions” are only “mental idols.” The “immortal seed of God” must come to birth in the soul and Christ must *live and operate* within. Boehme was thoroughly consistent in his application of the way of love to all the affairs of life. He believed that the Gospel of Christ would *work* in practice. War seemed to him one of the greatest marks of the apostacy of the Church. He takes a similar position to that taken by Erasmus, namely, that war and Christianity are utterly and forever incompatible. Boehme once more, like his predecessors, is a builder of the invisible Church. He makes nothing of sacraments. He turns inward rather than outward. He separates religion wholly from state connection. He wants a Christianity of prophets instead of one of priests and he calls men away from logical systems to personal experience.

The writings of nearly all these men reached England and were read by kindred spirits in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. John Everard is the first scholar of importance who shows a familiarity with the body of ideas and the type of Church set forth in the little books of the spiritual reformers on



the continent. He was born in 1575, the year Boehme was born ; he was a master of arts and doctor of divinity from Clare College, Cambridge. He was a student of the great mystics and later in life—after he was fifty—he translated tracts by Sebastian Franck and Hans Denck and Castellio's edition of "The Golden Book of German Divinitie." Everard's later sermons, printed in *The Gospel Treasury Opened* give the same general interpretation of Christianity which his Continental forerunners gave. He was, before everything else, a good man. He was, too, a man of undoubted depth and power, and he shows both style and humour. Though so often imprisoned that King James I. suggested that his name should be changed from Everard [Everout] to "Dr. Never-out," yet his influence was great and he is almost certainly the first man in England to hold and teach in any impressive way the views of the spiritual reformers. He had important disciples and many successors. The most noted of the disciples was Giles Randall, another translator of spiritual and mystical books. Francis Rous, Peter Sterry, John Saltmarsh and William Dell are good examples of the kind of successors whom Everard had.

Meantime other developments were under way which carried the ideas of the spiritual reformers forward into the popular consciousness more extensively than did the books

and sermons of these Cambridge and Oxford scholars. Groups of the common people formed into little societies and worked out in practice, in quiet, out-of-the-way places, the ideals of these teachers. Attempts of this sort were often made in Germany, where they were generally soon suppressed. In Holland they were much more successful and in that country, where a semi-freedom of conscience was allowed, small sects flourished. The most important of these independent sects were the societies of the Collegiants, who held the fundamental ideas of the spiritual reformers, with the added belief that the present existing Church is only an interim-church and that God will soon send a new apostle, supernaturally endowed and equipped, to be the beginner, the founder, of the true Church of Christ. For this event they looked and waited and thus were called "Seekers." They held that no one had the efficacious authority to administer sacraments or to be the bearer of an authoritative ministry-message. They therefore met in silence and waited for the Spirit to direct them. They looked after their own poor, watched carefully over the moral life—the "walk and conversation" of their membership. They were socially-minded and made love and fellowship the marks of their communion. They were opposed to oaths, and to the taking of human life for any reason, and in other ways they showed their con-

nection with the common man's reformation in the sixteenth century. During the period of the English Commonwealth numerous groups of similar sects appeared in England. They had strong, substantial members and their leaders, for they had unordained leaders, were able men and excellent guides. Many other sects swarmed as the degree of freedom increased. There were groups of "the Family of Love," who were followers of the mystic, Henry Nicholas, born in Westphalia in 1501. There were Ranters who were pantheists and frequently were morally loose and antinomian. In the years between 1646 and 1661 all the writings of Jacob Boehme were translated into English and now became a positive and powerful force, profoundly influencing such intellectual men as Sir Isaac Newton and John Milton,\* and forming the basic religious conceptions of many less noted persons. All these lines, including the group of Anabaptists, converge and receive their consummate expression in the Society of Friends, which, under the leadership of George Fox, spread throughout the English counties between 1648 and 1691, the latter date being the year of George Fox's death.

More important, however, than the formation of any religious organisation was the silent propagation of truths and ideas which spread across the world as winged seeds fly

\* See Bailey's *Milton and Jacob Boehme* (New York, 1914).

abroad in the autumn. The contagion of thought from mind to mind, from person to person, without any visible organisation, carried these ideals broadcast. They became winnowed of chaff as time sifted them and they gained in weight and value as they lost their capricious and erratic aspects. They heightened as they received interpretation at the hands of wise and balanced thinkers and gradually they won the standing which their discoverers could never succeed in giving them. Philosophical movements unconsciously co-operated towards a preparation of groups of people of similar ideals to those of the spiritual reformers. Social and political forces also became their allies. The religious and political experiments in the American colonies assisted greatly in shaping thought in the same direction, and in the revolutions carried through by the people in America and in France helped immensely to establish the principle of free conscience, separation of the Church and State, the inalienable right of man to be religious in his own way ; while the unorganised but irresistible forces of literature in Europe and America, especially from Wordsworth's time onwards, worked silently and powerfully to emphasise inward religion—the religion of the Spirit—and to make dogma and ecclesiasticism less important. We find ourselves at last in a world wholly changed from that which the great reformers, major reformers, endeavoured to make. Their

ideals are not our ideals. Their conception of the Church is largely dead or dying. We are, it must be admitted, not in the world of the spiritual reformers, but at the same time their ideals are much more nearly our ideals, their spirit is kindred with ours and, if they could return to life again they would feel at home with those who are now endeavouring to build the Kingdom of God, and would join heartily in spiritual communion and fellowship with those who are trying to carry the ideals of Christ into the actual life of the Church and the world.



## XII

### THE QUAKER "SEED"

GEORGE FOX (1624-1691) and the other propagators of Quakerism in the seventeenth century always thought of their movement as the "seed" of the true Church and a living "seed" of the Kingdom of God. They used the word "seed" in two senses in their abundant writings. It meant primarily something of God implanted in the soul of man and was often called by them "Light," or "Light Within." No less often they applied to this divine bestowment in the hidden centre of a man's being the word "Seed," or "immortal Seed," or "invisible Seed," or "Seed of God," and they attributed to this gift of grace all the spiritual processes and attainments which come to adorn and equip the full-grown Christian life.

In its other and secondary use the word "seed" (spelled with a small initial letter) refers to that vital germ or nucleus of the true Church of Christ which already exists in the world though only in its incipient and potential stage, but being *seed*, it is full of promise and carries in itself the hope of the

final triumph of the spiritual forces of the world. Fox did not conceive of himself as the founder of something new, the inaugurator of one more novel protestant sect. He thought of himself as the gatherer of the spiritual seed, already quick and vital, but, scattered over the world and unorganised, an invisible Church without outward form. In the early period of his ministry (1652) Fox had a remarkable vision on Pendle Hill, in the eastern edge of Lancashire, when he says: "the Lord let me see a great people to be gathered," which later he calls "a great people in white raiment." These "white raiment" people waiting to be gathered had been "seekers" but were now to be the "seed" not merely of the Society of Friends, but the "seed" of the true Church and kingdom of God, which should some day, Fox believed, be as wide as the human race.

When he first rode into Scotland in his work of gathering the "seed," George Fox had a very clear inward sense that there were some prepared souls there waiting to be brought in. "When I first set my horse's feet upon Scottish ground," he says, "I felt the seed of God to sparkle about me, like innumerable sparks of fire." "There is," he adds, "abundance of thick cloddy earth of hypocrisy and falseness above, and a briery, brambly nature which is to be burnt with God's word, and ploughed up with his spiritual

plough, before God's Seed brings forth heavenly and spiritual fruit to His glory. But the husbandman is to wait in patience." When the ship *Woodhouse*, with its band of Quaker missionaries bound for the New World, landed in Rhode Island in 1657, one of the enthusiastic group prophesied "by the irresistible Word of God" that "the seed in America shall be as the sands of the sea in number," *i.e.*, the "seed" of the future spiritual Church and society of the Kingdom. When George Fox came to America in 1672 he spoke of his mission as a visit to the "seed in America," and the same phrase is applied to his missionary visits to the continent of Europe, where he went to gather in the "seed" in Holland and Germany. Here, then, we have the true *remnant-idea*, the formation of a small prepared group of persons awakened, quickened, vitalised and and so made the bearers of spiritual life to the wider world, the "seed" of an immense harvest.

Recent historical research has demonstrated the fact that the Quaker movement was the legitimate inheritor of many lines of previous spiritual labour and effort. Fox's Pendle Hill vision of "a great people waiting to be gathered" was literally true. There were large groups of "Seekers" in Yorkshire, Lancashire and Westmorland, as he soon discovered, and there were expectant groups in many other parts of England as

well. They were cherishing the hope that God would send someone in true apostolic power to gather together into one living whole the members of Christ's Church and to restore Christianity to its original power as a way of life. This aspiration was very widespread and intense. It was not confined to groups which bore the name of "Seekers." It was shared, too, by the best of the Anabaptists, by the Lollard groups who had formed and nourished their lives upon the Gospels, by the mystical brotherhoods who bore the name of "Family of Love," by the devoted English disciples of Jacob Boehme (Behmen) and by the men who had come under the influence of the writings of Denck, Franck and Castellio, and had translated them into current English thought—men like John Everard, Francis Rous, John Saltmarsh, William Dell and Gerrard Winstanley. Both in England and America there really was a great "seed" to be gathered and the Quaker "Publishers of Truth," as these early propagators were called, knew how to gather this "seed" effectively.

The essential ideas which appeared in the early Quaker writings emphatically appear also in the books of these remnant forerunners. The same fundamental strivings move both the earlier and the later groups. The same determination to restore primitive Christianity is in evidence. The same ethical ideals, even the same peculiarities and

scruples of conscience come to light again. The same elemental conception of man and the same aspiration for a reorganised and purified social order dominate both the spiritual predecessors and the Quaker "seed" as it was gathered in by Fox and his helpers. We have in early Quakerism the convergence of many lines of spiritual travail, the absorption of many movements looking toward the Kingdom of God. It was one more positive attempt to produce a remnant or "seed" of the true society which God intends to create here in His world.

Let us now endeavour to gather up and review the essential characteristics of this "Quaker seed," this seventeenth century "remnant." It was undoubtedly the primary concern of George Fox to restore the Church and raise it to its destined place in the spiritual life of the world. His supreme interest lay in the sphere of religion. He possessed a peculiarly sensitive organisation and he belonged to the psychological type of persons from which mystics and prophets come. He could not satisfy his soul with the usual secondhand knowledge about God. The pious phrases which he heard from the pulpit seemed to him hollow, empty and unreal. He was determined to attain to another kind of knowledge. He longed to have a warm and intimate personal acquaintance with God. The story of his long quest for reality makes the early pages of his *Journal* an unusually



interesting human document. What he so eagerly sought he finally found, and to his unspeakable joy it became luminously clear to him that God is not off somewhere at the far end of the long ladders which men have laboriously set up in order to reach Him, but that He is a God very near at hand, at the very gate and threshold of man's own inner life. "I knew God experimentally," he declares in the rapture of his discovery. "I was," he adds, "as one who has a key and doth open."

It is always like the finding of a master-key to all mysteries when one discovers that God is not to be thought of as a distant being at the end of a chain of causes, at the conclusion of a syllogism, above the sky or in behind the phenomena of nature, as the Judge of the Assizes at the end of time, a being to be "accepted" by a *tour de force* on the authority of a dogma or priest; that He is rather the very flame of moral passion in our souls, revealed in some measure wherever conscience condemns a low selfish aim and pushes one of us up the slope towards a common "good" which can be shared with many. It was here within that the young weaver of the English Commonwealth found Him as a living God, forever creative, co-operative, loving and redemptive. It at once seemed to him the most important mission of his life to help other people to get this experience of God and to live sensitively

responsive to the God working immediately within, where personal life bursts into consciousness and where the calls to duty and righteousness voice themselves. Only out of such awakened and quickened persons, he believed, could a real Church be made.

But religion with George Fox was never an affair of another world than this one. Every truth of religion was a practical truth and must make a difference in life and action. The essential problems for Fox were not theological problems ; they were problems in the practical sphere of personal and social life. He strove to bring religion from heaven to earth, *i.e.*, to declare it to men as an inspiration and energy by which the full life of man could be lived and the potential promise of society could be realised. There is a very fine illustration of this attitude in a tract which Fox wrote to magistrates in 1657. Here is a striking passage from it :

"How are you in the pure religion . . . when both blind and sick and halt and lame lie up and down, cry up and down, in every corner of the city ; and men and women are so decked with gold and silver, in their delicate state, that they cannot tell how to go ? Surely, surely, you know that you are all of one mould and blood that dwell upon the face of the earth. Would not a little out of your abundance and superfluity maintain these poor children, halt, lame and blind, or set them at work that can work ; and

they that cannot, find a place of relief for them ; would not that be a grace to you ? ”

He was extraordinarily sensitive to human suffering but he was even more sensitive to feel the tragedy of the unrealised possibility of life. Wherever life was being made futile and abortive he felt a commission to challenge the hampering and constrictive conditions. Social habits, such as drinking of intoxicants in taverns, fighting and quarreling, cozening and cheating, lying and dissembling, stirred him deeply because he saw the real life of man being lost where these habits prevailed, and when people professed to be Christians and to belong to the Church and still did these things the “ profession ” seemed to him vain and hollow. The luxury which he saw being practised by rich church-members while multitudes of people were living in want, suffering and privation, “ struck at his life,” to use his forcible phrase, and presented an unendurable situation to him. Extravagant fashions and artificial forms of etiquette seemed to him intolerable, because they loaded life with unnecessary burdens, and tended to make men and women insincere, unnatural and hypocritical. They entailed the use of words and phrases which were not true, which the users did not *mean* and which were servile and flattering. Class distinctions appeared to him even more oppressive to the true life of man.

He proposed to cut straight through this

tangle of show and formalism and to have completely done with it. He would restore life to its rightful honesty, purity and simplicity. He highly esteemed a proper grace of manner and due reverence and honour to manhood and womanhood, but he felt that *truth* was the supreme quality of the soul, and therefore life must be so ordered that truth should be honoured and maintained. He would not take an oath because he would not admit that there were two standards of truth-telling—one for law-courts and one for ordinary everyday life. He would not say "you" to one person, because he felt that the plural form of address had been introduced to give distinction to the upper class, while "thou" was used for the poor and lowly. He would admit no practices in religion which discriminated against women, and the religious movement which he inaugurated was a powerful effort to give woman "her place of equal comradeship with man."

Fox had always an intense sympathy for the man who for any reason was *down*. The prisoners in the awful jails of the period peculiarly touched him. The undeveloped races, especially the Negroes and Indians, were frequently on his mind, and he always maintained that "something of God"—a divine potentiality—lay hidden within these people who had not yet had their chance.

On similar ground he took the absolutist position towards war and every form of human life-taking. Nothing, he felt, could justify the annihilation of personal life with its divine possibilities. There was, to his mind, no limit to the transforming power of love, no frontier where it should cease to operate. One of Fox's humble disciples wrote in 1661: "There is nothing stronger than love ; it makes an easy passage and drives that back which stands in the way . . . for in the strength of love one chases a thousand and the army of royalty marches forward and takes possession." If the God of all patience hoped and believed forever in the divine destiny of men, His children of the Light, who formed the seed of the true Church, they felt, should practice the same unending faith and limitless love in all human relationships. The original Quaker position is finely expressed in a document written by George Fox and Richard Hubberthorne in the early days of the English Restoration (1660). It says in part :

"Our principle is and our practices have always been to seek peace and ensue it ; to follow after righteousness and the knowledge of God, seeking the good and welfare and doing that which tends to the peace of all. We know that wars and fightings proceed from the lusts of men, as James iv. 1-3, out of which lusts the Lord hath redeemed us and so out of the occasion of war. . . . All



bloody principles and practices we as to our own particular do utterly deny, with all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons for any end or under any pretence whatsoever ; and this is our testimony to the whole world. . . . The Spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it ; as we do certainly know and so testify to the world that the Spirit of Christ which leads us into all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ nor for the kingdoms of this world."

Fox and his friends realised fully that this idealist position of theirs was only a venture of faith. It was, they knew, not accepted by the existing historical Churches. They could maintain their faith and hope in the organised world, where war was thought of as an essential part of any national scheme, only by a continual process of suffering for it, until the "truth" should win its way and penetrate the heart of the world. It seemed to them that they were to be planted in hard, brambly, unploughed soil of the world, as the "seed" of God's true kingdom. They were to be "the remnant people" exhibiting through pain and suffering and death the way of love and life and truth. Others would no doubt go on fighting for their causes until Christ's idea of life should come to birth in

them and they should learn to trust and to practise the higher way, the wisdom of love which is better than weapons of war. This remnant conception is well expressed in two seventeenth century passages, one by Isaac Penington and one by Robert Barclay. Penington advocating a mission of the faithful and righteous "seed" says :

"I speak not this against any magistrates or peoples defending themselves against foreign invasions ; or making use of the sword to suppress the violent and evil-doers within their borders—for this the present state of things may and doth require, and a great blessing will attend the sword where it is borne uprightly to that end and its use will be honourable ; and, while there is need of a sword, the Lord will not suffer that Government, or those governors to want fitting instruments under them for the managing thereof, who wait on Him in His fear to have the edge of it rightly directed—but yet there is a better state, which the Lord hath already brought some into, and which nations are to expect and travel towards. Yea, it is far better to know the Lord to be the Defender, and to wait on Him daily, and see the need of His strength, wisdom and preservation, than to be never so strong and skilful in weapons of war."

In much the same strain Barclay declares that the present rulers of the Christian world have not learned the full scope of patience and

love and have not arrived at the pure dispensation of the Gospel.

— " . . . and, therefore, while they are in that condition, we shall not say that war, undertaken upon a just occasion, is altogether unlawful to them. For, even as circumcision and the other ceremonies were for a season permitted to the Jews . . . because that spirit was not yet raised up in them whereby they could be delivered from such rudiments; so the present confessors of the Christian name, who are yet in the mixture and not in the patient, suffering spirit, are not yet fitted for this form of Christianity and therefore cannot be undefending themselves, until they attain that perfection. But, for such whom Christ has brought hither, it is not lawful to defend themselves by arms, but they ought over all to trust to the Lord."\*

It takes immense faith to swing out thus from the main social current of the world on a unique venture like that and to make an experiment in the practice of love, when everybody else insists that nothing will work but *force*. It means flying in the face of hard facts. It is a course of action which "common sense" at once refuses. It involves putting into practice the laws of the Kingdom of God before that Kingdom has really come. It is a method which "passes

\* These two passages are quoted from W. C. Braithwaite's *Second Period of Quakerism*, pp. 611-12.

understanding " and more or less defies the long established habits of the race. These Friends, however were absolutely convinced that God had opened to them the true way of life—His divine way—and had called them to be the pioneers of it in the modern world. They realised only too clearly that the kingdom of God had not come, but they had an inward sense that it *never would come* until somebody believed in its principles enough to try them out in actual operation. They resolved to go forward then and make the experimental trial and take the consequences. They assumed without further debate that *truth* can always be trusted to conquer with its own invincible forces, that *righteousness* has a might of its own that can be matched without fear against the weapons of brass and iron, and that the patient, suffering spirit by which Christ accomplished the redemption of the world is as practical a power as is the explosive force of gunpowder.

They knew, of course, that the world would turn and rend them for their refusal to conform to its ancient ways and customs, but they possessed the undaunted spirit of pioneers and they decided to go forward and see what would come as the result of their faith. More and more clearly, as time went on, they perceived that they formed only a "remnant." The world turned upon them fiercely and tried to cure them of their "folly." They became only the more convinced by the



fierce cruelty that *force* could not settle the validity of truth nor determine which way of life was eternally the right way. They stoutly maintained that the State had no warrant to invade conscience or to compel the soul. They complained that truth still remained true even after the man who witnessed it had been buried alive in a dungeon or done to death on gallows.

Harder to bear than persecution, however, was the test of normal life which came with toleration after persecution had failed to break or defeat their venture. Every spiritual movement meets sooner or later the inevitable tendency to become adjusted, secularised, levelled down to the order of life prevailing around it. The Friends engaged in occupations in the business world where economic laws rather than the laws of the Kingdom of God operated. They lived in the midst of a society which constantly ignored their principles of life and love, and it proved very easy for them to slide unconsciously into the world's way of dealing and doing. They guarded as much as they could against this insidious tendency by adopting a peculiar garb, a special mode of speech, a manner of life, which isolated them, hedged them around and made them "a peculiar people," and they undertook to guard their spiritual citadel by expelling from membership all who deviated from the sacred customs of their group. They determined at



all costs to preserve the "remnant," even if it were only a remnant of a remnant! In the nineteenth century a wave of evangelicalism swept over the Society of Friends and profoundly changed its basis of thought, bringing its members into much closer accord with the evangelical churches. Their "peculiarities" gradually disappeared. Their exclusiveness vanished. They came out from behind their hedges and took up the public tasks of corporate life. They entered politics. They worked for common causes. They came into intimate fellowship with other Christian bodies. But deep within the heart of the membership the old fidelity to the principle of peace still remained and in the times of testing Friends continued to show a central loyalty to Christ's way of life. In all the wars of the last hundred years Friends have officially declared themselves to be dedicated to peace. Where the national appeal for individual loyalty has been peculiarly strong some Friends have always been found in the military forces of their country, but there has always at the same time been a large Quaker remnant ready to suffer to any limit in behalf of "the testimony to truth," as Friends love to call it. And in the times of peace this same remnant has seriously endeavoured to practise a way of life which would obliterate the seeds of war and take away the occasion for it. The group of the faithful has been all too small, its insight too

feeble and its range of constructive effort too narrow, but its sincerity has been fine, its spirit brave, and it has inspired others to take up a similar loyalty to truth. In fact, it has been and continues to be a "seed."

### XIII

#### THE FUNCTION OF THE REMNANT

I HAVE very briefly reviewed a few of the outstanding remnant movements in history. Those which I have chosen are all selected from the purview of the Christian Church, and they are only typical specimens of the remnant-idea, not an exhaustive list of the attempts to attain and realise the ideals of early Christianity. They exhibit, as I said in the opening chapter, two general types (1) the rebel type and (2) the type which aims at reform from within the body. The former breaks away from the main body, gives up hope of arriving at the goal by slowly raising the spiritual level of the original group by efforts from within. It "swarms out" from the parent hive, organises on its own independent lines, becomes a propagandist of the truth, makes disciples wherever it can effectively carry its appeal and builds up a rival body, alongside the body from which it went out. The other method is gentler, more patient, though generally not as intense, rigoristic or uncompromising. Those who form the second type go somewhat beyond the general level of the group

to which they belong. They see farther or with clearer vision than the rest. They possess consciences that are more acute than those of their fellows. They are more detached from the world and more ready than most people to forego the advantages of a successful career and the rewards which go with conformity to prevailing customs, in order to champion the cause of truth and light, and to work for *what ought to be*. But while they see farther and intend to go farther than the mass of those who constitute their fellowship they do not propose to rebel from it (except as a last resort). They preserve a fundamental faith in the conquering power of truth, and they believe all things, hope all things and are ready to endure all things, in the great business of making others see what they see.

Both these types have made important contributions to progress. They have both furthered truth and light. And the question as to which of the two methods is the more commendable way must always be determined by the historical situation to be met: the reasonableness of the main group, their receptivity toward new ideas, their general malleability, *i.e.*, capability of being re-forged and reformed under heat and pressure, and on the other hand the temperament of the leader of the advanced wing, his readiness to move patiently forward, to put up with a part of the achievement at which he aims and his

willingness to compromise where compromise is possible without the surrender of the central principle. Some emergencies make the second way futile and impossible and some conditions make it the only wise and effective course.

In any case the formation of a "remnant," of one or the other of these types, seems to be historically the most approved method of securing an advancement of the truth. It is devoutly to be hoped that in some happy future time there will exist methods and systems of education which will enable the new-born arrivals to discover what the past has been about, where it has blundered and where it has achieved, and which will direct the instincts, emotions and sentiments of the growing youth, as well as inform their minds, so that they can discover not merely in solitary instances, but almost uniformly, how to fulfil their potential capacities and to realise "the mighty hopes that make us men." Our educational methods are still in an immature stage. We succeed with a few and fail with the many. While we are waiting for the transformation and transfiguration of education we must count, as of old, upon the leadership of prepared groups, or "remnants," the propagation of truth through a concentrated and more or less "charged" and dynamised fellowship, devoted to the forward movement.

Why not be satisfied, someone will ask,



to rely upon the propagation of ideas through books and articles or by public addresses? Why form a remnant? Well, books and articles and public addresses, except in the rare cases where they come from the pen or lips of a genius, leave the great world—I had almost said the dull stagnant world—pretty much unmoved and undisturbed. A very few people read the propagandist book, or go to hear the propagandist speech, and those who do read or listen are for the most part already in sympathy with the new ideas, or at least open-minded enough to expose themselves to the danger of conviction. It is extremely easy to leave a book unread or to read it and remain unkindled. It is easier still to let the lecturer talk to empty benches while we follow the pursuits of our busy, occupied life. These things can be ignored and left on one side. They may give us pin-pricks and occasionally jog us half awake, but they do not force us to take sides. They do not compel us to choose which cause we will henceforth serve.

The formation of a remnant, on the other hand, brings a vigorous challenge. It puts the issue sharply. It breaks the existing lethargy. It disturbs the even tenor of life. It is hard to ignore a large, militant social group, kindled into white heat by the power of a *live* idea. Whether one wants to read and listen or not, it becomes exceedingly difficult to close down the shutters of the

mind and remain undisturbed when the truth has passed from a single champion into a large social group dedicated to the task of making the larger world see it.

A truth gathers validity, weight and momentum every time it wins a new adherent. We cannot call any fact or idea "truth" so long as only one mind testifies to it, so long as it rests only on the insight of one person. It *may* be truth, but we cannot say yet that it *must* be true. Truth involves an aspect of necessity and universality. If the thing our soul discovers is essentially true, we shall be able in time to rally converts to it and to build up a body of believers in it. In fact, the only way by which we can try out and test a fresh idea is in and through a social group. Sometimes a new faith or a new truth sweeps like a Pentecost over the world and possesses a vast multitude of peoples as though they had been waiting expectantly for it to arrive. It *finds* men as soon as it is announced. It establishes itself at once as a truth for which the soul seems to have been fashioned in advance. Most truths, however, have not been of that type. They appear first as a conviction in some single soul. The individual discoverer trusts his insight enough to proclaim it. It is both believed and doubted by the hearers of it. It is both affirmed and denied. It has to make its way; it must run the gauntlet. He must gradually learn how to defend it, how to

present it better, how to meet criticism and objection, how to work out its further implications and to link it up and correlate it with truth already established. It will be pretty sure to come into conflict with habits and prejudices. It will sooner or later touch and affect *interests*, either commercial, political or professional. If this "truth" spreads it will mean loss to some people. Those whose *interests* are concerned are likely to form a solid body of opposition and to compel the new prophet, or the propagandist, if we are not ready to use the grander word to go down deeper and to found his truth on the most broad and solid base possible.

Under these conditions, and they are the usual conditions confronting any new truths, there is no way forward except the way of the "remnant." The truth must now be matured and tested in a group of persons who accept it with conviction and are ready to suffer for it or stake life on it. So long as it has no backing except the mere affirmation of the individual who asserts it and writes it in his book or tract, it may be only *mere words*, some peculiar subjective seeming of an erratic mind—no eternal truth at all. But when it carries conviction to the minds of those who hear it, when it organises them and fuses them together, when it enables them to readjust and reconstruct their way and manner of life to fit the new truth, and when it stands the moral strain of holding many

lives together, of rebuilding their system of thought and action and of enabling them to meet the stern collisions of those who are determined to put down their "truth," we have gained some right to ask whether the eternal nature of things is not in it and backing it.

Of course, it is not a question of votes or of majorities. We cannot make the easy assumption that a thing is true because many persons believe it to be true. Under some psychological conditions almost any unsubstantial delusion or belief will float and get millions of supporters. The fact that a vast number of "voters" say "aye" to it does not prove that it is therefore *true*. We cannot be quick pragmatists and fall in with the theory that the voice of the people is *ipso facto* the voice of God. But the slow, historical testing out of truth through the social relationships of a loyal group, which we may well call a remnant, does offer a valuable method of examining its real validity. History is one of the surest of the judgment seats in the universe. The "Judgment Day" of which the ancient prophets spoke still remains a mystery about which we have no further light than their words give us. But the judgment days of history are as certain and verifiable as the multiplication table. Ideas and ideals are sifted and sorted by an unescapable "doom." In the long run the processes of the universe weed



out that which does not fit the moral nature and destiny of the race. The remnant thus furnishes on a larger or smaller scale a laboratory experiment for testing the value of an idea, a faith, a truth. There can be no remnant at all until an idea has come to life, dynamic enough to build a coherent group. Then this coherent group, if it is to persist and prevail, must inevitably stand the universe. It cannot retreat to some other world ; it must live and work in this one. It must face the laws of the outside and inside world. It can live for a little while on an iridescent dream, but if it is to have any wide scope and long duration it must weather the disintegrating forces which try every "society." It must have *substance* enough to feed thought in a large variety of minds and to refashion emotions and reform sentiments. It must furnish staying power and supply those inward forces that make one able to endure hatred, reproach, ostracism, persecution in its many-headed forms and to prefer death itself to disloyalty to the truth or the group.

After all, there is of course no infallible proof to be found here or anywhere that an inward discovery is *true*. This social world of ours is not a world of infallibilities. The sphere of absolute certainty is a very restricted sphere. We can attain here only to high degrees of probability and to immense confidence in our venture. Every remnant



reviewed in the preceding chapters has stood out for some phase of truth and spiritual life which was doubted, questioned and defied by large numbers of contemporaries, but which has since in the winnowings of time become adopted by multitudes of people, confirmed by wide experience and has finally been builded into the conscious or unconscious structure of the moral and religious life of the world. Some other features which once seemed important and even vital and essential to the remnant groups have been suppressed and are lost in the limbo of the dead years. So it will always be with spiritual movements. The immediate judgment of a remnant group is partial, one-sided and incapable of seeing its precious faith in the perspective of a distant futurity. Some points of emphasis are likely to be far too great and others perhaps too feeble. As the movement expands and its implications come into full view, as the social effects stand clearly revealed, and as the forces of history test and winnow it its truth and its weaknesses are unveiled. The truths become known for what they really are. They are no longer the faith of a mere remnant; they are the possession of the whole race.

## XIV

### THE MISSION AND SERVICE OF A REMNANT

ONE of the greatest of all our practical problems of life is that concerned with our *obligation* to organised society and to its historical institutions. The most impressive forms of organised society that have called for obligation from the individual during the period of historical civilisation are the Church and the State. The Family is of course an over-individual group of fundamental importance for the formation of personality and for the social and moral life of the individual ; but in its true nature and character it is an organism rather than an organisation, the relationship between the members being a vital relationship, not one of law and external authority. In ideal no doubt the same can be said of Church and State. There are times when neither is thought of as having external authority but as being the conjunct and inclusive self into which the tiny individual life is merged and fused as a co-operant member in a vital organism. There is then no problem of authority. Obedience is uncalculating and unconscious. The question

of obligation is no more raised in that situation than it is raised in the operations of the organs of the living body.

That is, however, an ideal situation, while under normal conditions the individual finds himself viewing both Church and State as vast organisations, external to him and yet imposing certain duties upon him, proposing certain unalterable principles or laws to which he must conform, speaking with an authority that is not to be mistaken, laying definite obligations upon him and expecting from him an undivided loyalty.

We can hardly overestimate the ethical importance of these two formative forces of the world, in their two spheres of influence. Nobody can attain to the full stature of personality except in a society so organised that both the authority of law and the authority of truth make their obligations felt upon his individual life. He must be a citizen of a state with its historical ideals, its inherited traditions, its forward-looking aspirations, its insistence upon obedience to law, its determination to exhibit the consequences of wrong doing. Hardly less essential for the development of full personality is membership in an organised body devoted to the transmission of the spiritual experience of the past, to the formulation of ideals of life and to the interpretation of truth.

We may call the two great formative and stabilising forces by different names and we

shall expect that they will become embodied in varying forms in different epochs of history, but in some form or other both influences are necessary for rich, rightly fashioned personality. The individual must take over into his own self-consciousness the gains of past ages. He must gather up through his relationships the lessons of history. He must overcome his erratic traits and tendencies by learning submission to larger and wiser groups. He must cease to be *self-willed* and stubborn. He must discover the dangers of being, what the Greeks called, an "idiot" (*idiotés*), a private, peculiar, isolated, unorganised individual, at the mercy of his own particular seemings and desires. Diogenes, that *enfant terrible* of Grecian society, is a typical "idiot" of this unformed and uncivilised sort. He is, on his own assumption, the only "man" existing. No lantern is luminous enough to reveal in the world around him any person whom he can recognise as a "man," all except himself being "spoiled" by conformity to social conditions and requirements!

Here, then, in the deep and essential relationships of social, conjunct, organic life, our sense of obligation is born. It reaches its most august character in affairs which concern the Family, State, and the Church, *i.e.* in the appeal of love, of law and righteousness, and of truth. These visible institutions in each case are the temporary organs or instru-



ments of invisible and eternal realities to which we can hardly rise without the help of the visible interpretation. Our momentous problem, as I said in the opening of this chapter, is where to draw the boundary and limits of obligation to the visible institutions which serve us in a multitude of ways towards the formation and preservation of all that constitutes our higher life. The individual possesses very little indeed which he has not "received" from the over-individual groups and bodies that have ministered to him from the day of his arrival here as a new "unit." He is no "self-made" person. He owes vast debts, which he cannot hope to pay, to visible and invisible bearers of light and love and truth. Every institution which assists him to make his gradual advances rests for its life and power upon the heroic deeds and efforts and sacrifices of men and women who out of a distant past transmitted this precious gift to him as well as upon the brave and loyal contributions of the present generation that was toiling for him when he arrived.

Not lightly certainly can he "go back on" all that has been done for him without him, as the theologians put it. He begins life under heavy obligations. Unborn generations, too, will be profoundly affected by the way in which he passes on the torch, by the way in which he treats the immense accumulation of gains that have fallen upon him without any cost to him. *Obligation* is one of



the weightiest words in human language. Not to feel its deep call, not to respond to its summons, is not to be in any proper sense a person. But that must not mean that the individual is bound under all circumstances to do what the Church and the State and the other institutions of society tell him to do. He is not, and he must not be considered, a mere tool of the social organizations. He is not a cog in a vast mechanism, compelled to move to fit the general grind of the immense machine. He is a *person*, with a certain sphere of "power on his own act," with an area of initiative within himself, with a unique destiny to achieve and his own peculiar ends of goodness to express. He cannot merely tick off and register the verdicts of society. He cannot serve as a mere instrument to maintain and record the *status quo* which others before him have secured. He has his own creative work to do and he has his spiritual additions to make to the score of truth and life. He must, above everything else and as a sacred duty, insist upon his personal freedom as a man, whom God has made in His own image and likeness. When the question of obligation is deeply considered it always appears that the individual owes a supreme, an unescapable obligation to the ideals which have come to birth in his own soul and to those visions of advance which seem to him to come from his inward relationship with

infinite and eternal reality. There are occasions when an individual can serve society best and most fittingly, not by yielding to its conventions nor to its historic customs and estimates nor to its requirements of what is necessary for the preservation of the *status quo*, but by standing out under the compulsion of some vision of advance in the championship of an ideal which ought to prevail but does not yet prevail. If there is *vitality* to this vision of advance and if it is grounded in eternal reality, it will awaken a response in the souls of others and gather a group of loyal supporters, and thus produce a *remnant*. We must not say perhaps that the vision of one lone individual who just "cries in the wilderness" and gets no followers, is a misguided and abortive vision, pointing towards a blind alley. But there are at least grounds for "suspecting" the validity of a *cause* which does not kindle response in any soul except that of the pioneer of it. I have discussed already in the previous chapter the function of the remnant in testing out the social valuation of a vision or an ideal, and we may safely neglect any "prophesying" which does not succeed in rallying and organising any social group of champions. That would be a case, if there ever is one, of a "truth," if it turned out to be true, proclaimed "ahead of its time."

When on the other hand, a vision of advance does get its group of apostles and does organ-

ise a remnant it would seem clear that the highest call of *obligation* in the souls of those who constitute the dedicated group must be to the proclamation and realisation of the vision or the ideal that points forward to a goal beyond the previous achievements of society even though society itself in the form of its organised institutions endeavours to block and prevent the advance. This is the well-known situation which raises what has been called "a rivalry of loyalties," when there is almost sure to be a difference of judgment in respect to the line where the highest obligation lies. Many are ready to follow the vision until it leads into conflict with the existing organised institutions and involves a refusal to obey the authority of the body which voices the will of the majority.

It is here that the hardest choice of life lies, and no one on the outside can ever propose any fixed rule by which a given individual must act in a given case. All one can say is that it may be right, and often has been, and it may be wise, and often has been, in cases of rivalry of loyalties, to stand by the vision of advance and go with the remnant. It may in the long run serve society far better, than unquestioning obedience to its conservative authority would have served it. Sometimes nothing can count so much as a practical exhibition of utter fidelity to *what ought to be*. It is generally a poor excuse for

action along the line of least resistance to say in a crisis that ideal conditions do not exist yet, the Kingdom of God has not come, the world is on a lower level of practice and method and therefore we must surrender to the demands of its old ways and customs and requirements. It is just that course which forever postpones the kingdom of the ideal and banishes it to some other world, off somewhere in the valley of Avilion.

It is the real mission and service of the remnant to go forward with a venture of faith and to put its vision of advance, its ideals of what ought to be, into practice here and now. It often means moving along the line of greatest resistance. It involves generally a transvaluation of values. It carries with it under most circumstances a collision with old standards and authorities. And it is likely to entail much suffering. It is a path which goes over Golgotha and it will sort out and leave behind those who have an eye to ease and quick "success." But it is a way on the whole of promoting truth, of advancing the highest interests of humanity, and of carrying forward the divine work of creation—of making man and of bringing in the true social order. Its way, however, must be one of modesty, humility and meekness—not of boasting and violence. Its way does not admit of claims to infallibility or of bold assertion that no other course is right. Its way is the way of love, the way of light, the

way of truth and the way of life. It takes its kingdom by persuasion, not by force, and it triumphs by convicting the heart, convincing the mind and moving the will, not by fulminating its "authority." It wins, if it wins at all, because it discovers and champions what fits the deepest nature of man's essential life and finally proves it to be so in the sphere of practice and of moral effects.



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